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GILLS V GEORDIES IN MOVIE COMEDY

WHAT'S ON & WATCH

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PREPARED: Gills boss Mark Stimson looks at the important Christmas fixtures. Search 'Gills'

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■ BY GARY WRIGHT

A NEW film is set to feature Gillingham against Premiership team Newcastle United in an FA Cup game.

Comedy movie The Shouting Men sees Gillingham FC make the quarter-finals of the FA Cup.

The story focuses on a band of die-hard, yet dysfunctional Gills supporters and their eventful road trip to Tyneside for the biggest day in their club's history.

It is understood film crews were at the Gills ground two weeks ago but club officials refused to discuss it. But in the run up to Christmas this week camera crews are at St James's Park.

The Newcastle Chronicle is reporting that John Barnes, Peter Beardsley and Chris Kamara will all take cameo roles in the movie.

And this week producers of the film were asking 200 Toon fans to be extras for the British film, which is set to be screened next year.

Supporters chosen to appear in the movie will get two free tickets to Newcastle's home game against West Ham on January 10.

Newcastle United spokesman Gary Oliver told the Chronicle: "The Shouting Men is an exciting new British comedy that will prove very popular not just with football fans but to the general public."

"St James's Park has featured in lots of big movies in the past. It's a magnificent stadium



CAMEO: John Barnes

THE LITTLE ANGELS

Youngsters at Gad's Hill School entered the festive spirit with a week of Christmas celebrations.

Thoughts first turned to Christmas Day with the kindergarten's traditional nativity play, performed at the Royal Dockyard Church in Chatham. The 80-strong group of three to six-year-olds told the story of Jesus' birth through word and song, with not a line missed.

Junior School head Jennie Marsh said: "The kindergarten nativity sums up what Christmas is about and for all our parents it's a time to be immensely proud of our children."

The Christmas festivities continued with the school's traditional carol service at Rochester Cathedral. Headmaster David Criggs said: "Christmas is very close to our hearts at Gad's Hill because of our wonderful Dickens connection. Our carol service captures the Christmas spirit captured by Dickens."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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2 Take a tour of Kent's own version of Lapland. See web TV site www.yourkenttv.co.uk and search 'Lapland'.



3 Pantomime perfect with Snow White. See web TV site www.yourkenttv.co.uk and search 'Marlowe'.

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CHANGES: Medway community college is already set to become an academy. This week a third academy, at New Brompton College, has been proposed for the area

Third college joins list to be an academy

■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

PROPOSALS to form a third academy in Medway will be discussed by council chiefs in the new year.

The plans to build a new academy at New Brompton College in Gillingham will go before Medway council's cabinet in January.

School bosses have already unveiled plans to open two other academies in the towns - combining Chapter and Temple schools in Strood into one and Chatham South School and Medway Community College into the other.

Children's services boss Les Wicks said: "We have, so far, given approval for an academy in Strood and last week we proposed the Chatham Academy.

"We need to make sure Gillingham has a similar chance to consider state of the art facilities and the advantages it may be able to bring."

"The proposed academy at New Brompton College is all part of our plan to build schools for the future now and make sure we provide the best current and future opportunities for our children."

"This academy will play a vital role in ensuring young people in Gillingham gain the knowledge, confidence and skills to develop into productive, responsible and success-

ful members of our community."

New Brompton College headteacher Judy Rider said she is confident parents and carers will support the move to an academy.

She said: "This is a welcome and positive move. An academy in Gillingham will bring significant benefits to the whole community."

"It will allow the school to drive standards up further through progressive and innovative curriculum plans, building on the significant and sustained improvements made over the past few years and accelerate student progress."

"The proposal is for specialisms in science and the arts."

Medway council's director of children and adult services Rose Collinson said: "The proposed academy at New Brompton offers the very best opportunity to provide an innovative school for Gillingham with a broad, rich and sustainable curriculum that will be attractive and motivating to young people and their parents."

"Working in partnership with its sponsors, the academy will provide a full range of academic and vocational courses so students will succeed in learning and be well equipped to achieve their aspirations and ambitions."

The new academy would be sponsored by the University of Kent with Medway council acting as a co-sponsor.

Big names called in for Gills football film

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE
that also looks great on the big screen.

"We are looking for 200 fans to appear as extras in the film and we are offering two free tickets to the West Ham game to each of them. It's a great deal."

The production will star bubbly blonde Lara Lewington, the weather presenter on Channel Five news, and BBC Sports Presenter Mark Pougatch.

Previous films to have been shot at St James's Park include hit trilogy Goal!, starring Kuno Becker and Anna Friel, and 2000 movie Purely Belter, which had a cast bursting with North East actors such as Tim Healy and Kevin Whately.

yourmedway NEWS IN BRIEF

Safety fears as cars drive through patrols

IMPATIENT drivers are putting children's lives in danger, according to Medway council's road safety team.

The warning comes despite efforts to protect youngsters on their way to and from school, with many schools employing lollipop men to patrol the roads in the morning and afternoon.

During the past year the road safety team has received a number of shocking reports - with motorists having driven through the patrol while children are trying to cross the road and hurling abuse at the lollipop men.

Road safety officer Sarah West said: "It seems our beloved lollipop men and women are becoming harder to find and keep due to abuse and misuse by drivers. Just imagine the patrol is crossing your child and by patient in order to help these valued members of the community do their job safely."

When a patrol displays a stop sign, motorists must stop to allow children to cross, or the driver risks prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000 and three penalty points on their driving licence.

Jewellery store burgled

FOUR men have been arrested following an early morning raid at a Hemstead Valley jewellers.

The four - all from outside the Medway area - used hammers and crow bars to enter the shopping centre at 2am this morning before smashing through the front of the Ernest Jones store. They were arrested following a police pursuit.

All items are thought to have been recovered.

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Kelly's strictly rockin' around the Christmas tree with Brian

GLAMOUR girl Kelly Brook is set to star in the Christmas Day edition of hit show Strictly Come Dancing.

Last year the 29-year-old TV presenter turned actress was forced to withdraw from the show because of the death of her father. She had been hotly tipped to take first place.

But this year she will be battling to be festive champion alongside former winners Jill Halfpenny and Alesha Dixon, who will take on the top three from this year's show.

The trio and their partners will line up against Tom Chambers and Camilla Dallerup, Lisa Snowdon and Brendan Cole, and Rachel Stevens and Vincent Simone.

Showbiz insiders predict a close competition with 2007 winners Alesha Dixon and Matthew Cutler and 2004 winners Jill Halfpenny and Darren Bennett, and Rochester-born

■ BY NICK AMES

Kelly, who now lives in a farmhouse in Grafty Green, near Maidstone, and her partner Brian Fortuna completing the line-up.

Kelly and Brian will dance a jive to Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree.

Other songs featured include Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Sleigh Ride, 2 Become 1, White Christmas and Favourite Things.

The show's Christmas special has become a feature of the festive TV schedules in recent years and is usually pre-recorded a week before it goes out – but only after the finalists are known so the Strictly Christmas Champions can be crowned.

But Kelly's return was controversial, resulting in a public row over who should accompany her.

According to national newspaper, professional dancers James Jordan

and Brian Fortuna rowed over who should be on Kelly's arm in the run-up to the festive special.

The story claimed things got heated backstage when James, 30, and Brian, 26, both put themselves forward to be her partner.

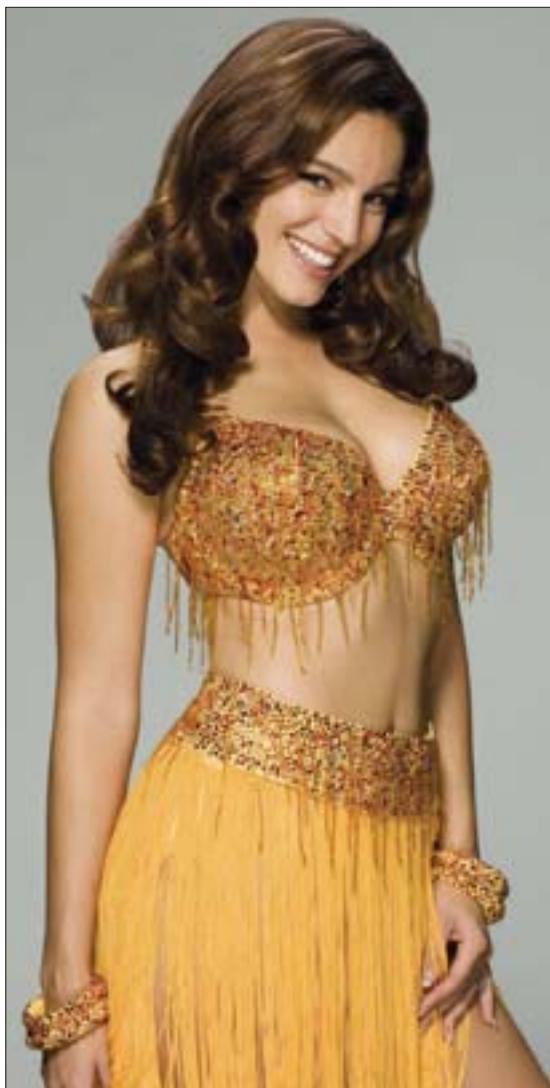
A show source told The Sun: "It started off civilised with them arguing what dances they'd do, but got heated.

"Even though both men were deadly serious, it was hilarious, like that scene from Bridget Jones's Diary where Hugh Grant fights Colin Firth."

Kelly was originally paired with Brendan Cole, but as he and partner Lisa are still in the competition, Kelly needed a new man.

The source said: "Brendan isn't overjoyed by Kelly's return. They weren't close. But she could give Lisa tips on handling his moods."

Russell Watson will also be performing on the show on BBC1 at 7pm, which is set to top the TV ratings.



SHE'S BACK: Kelly Brook will appear in the Christmas show of Strictly Come Dancing

Dates set for final closure of our popular Woolies stores

THE Woolworths stores in Medway have been granted a temporary reprieve and will not close for business on Saturday.

Instead the outlets in Chatham and Gillingham will survive for a further few days after the closure dates were announced by administrators Deloitte, who have failed to find a buyer for the stores.

They are being closed in batches of 200, with the second round on December 30, followed by January 2, with the last ones shutting on January 5.

Branches in Maidstone, Canterbury, Margate, Ramsgate, and Tenterden, are set to close in three days time.

Throughout the county there are 35 Woolworths stores employing a total of 1,167 people, who all now face the prospect of losing their jobs.

The stores have been a fixture of the Medway towns since they opened around 70 years ago.

They have recently seen a massive sale with prices up to 50 per cent down on the norm and there are still bargains available until all stock is cleared.

Driving licence fines labelled 'stealth tax'

TORY hopeful Rehman Chishti has slammed the Government policy of charging motorists for new driving licences every ten years as a "stealth tax".

The parliamentary candidate for Gillingham and Rainham fears people are not aware of the current requirements and may be breaking the law unknowingly.

Legislation in force means motorists face fines of up to £1,000 for not updating their licences every ten years.

Changes made to the driving licence in 1998 mean every decade motorists must pay to have new photo identification, even though people are licensed to drive until they are 70.

The renewal date is hidden in small print on the card under section 4b, said Mr Chishti.

He said: "The Government is also charging for the privilege of getting a new licence by currently charging £17.50 for each person, which means it will make £437 million over the next 25 years.

"It is astonishing the Government is making people update their driving licence every ten years when they can legally drive until they are



FEAR: Conservative Rehman Chishti is concerned Labour are criminalising drivers

70 and charging them for the privilege.

"If they don't comply they could face fines of £1,000. This is just another stealth tax from the Labour Government.

"I call on transport minister Paul Clark to review this policy, which is criminalising and penalising motorists."

Mr Clark is the Labour MP for Gillingham and Rainham.



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NEWS IN BRIEF

Businesses take to the airwaves to stop crime

RETAILERS at Horsted business park have joined forces in the battle to beat crime – using radios to combat shoplifters.

The radio handsets enable workers to communicate with one other and share important information.

Similar systems have already been established in other areas, such as Chatham High Street.

It is hoped the radios will result in a drop in shoplifting and anti-social behaviour and will help stores to better protect themselves.

PC Oliver-Jones said: "I am pleased the local businesses will be able to benefit from the radio system and work together to keep crime levels to a minimum."

"Particularly in the run up to Christmas, many shops are vulnerable to shoplifting, but it is hoped the radio system will act as a deterrent to would-be criminals."

Joe Swinbanks, from Toys R Us, said: "We are pleased to be part of the safer Medway partnership and can now communicate with other retailers on the Horsted Retail Park by way of a radio link scheme, in partnership with the police."

"This will not only help to make our store a safer environment to shop and work, but will also help police to apprehend any shoplifters that frequent the retail park."

Other businesses on the park included in the scheme are B&Q and PC World.

Butterfly event brings world's finest to table

THE world's elite table tennis players will head to Medway in the New Year for a two-day tournament.

More than 200 talented players will take part in the Butterfly Grand Prix series, held at the Black Lion Leisure Centre in Gillingham on Saturday and Sunday, January 3-4.

Medway-based players including Chris Martin, Ian Gordon and Mark Buckley and juniors such as Kirsty and Ross Wilson, Harry Lumb and Phil Thomas will take on international-standard players from England, Scotland and even Chinese Taipei.

English Table Tennis Association's Matthew Porter said: "This year's competition should be a great event with international and local standard playing and fighting it out for different titles."

"We hope to see lots of local players and fans of the game there to enjoy the weekend's table tennis."

The event runs all day on Saturday and Sunday and there is free spectator access throughout the weekend.

For more information about the Butterfly Grand Prix series, visit www.englishtabletennis.org.uk.

Archbishop's Christmas message defends the world's children

Exploitation of our youngsters cannot prevail

■ BY IAN PATEL

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has delivered a fierce defence of the world's children in his traditional Christmas message.

Dr Rowan Williams, who will address a packed congregation on Christmas Day morning at Canterbury Cathedral, also made what appears to be a thinly-veiled attack on abortion as he demanded that unborn children not be regarded as "less than members of the human family".

Writing in the wake of the Baby P scandal, he criticises a world where children have become "despised, exploited, even feared". Dr Williams also raised fears that the economic downturn would lead to greater suffering and deprivation for children, and we should all stand up to protect them.

He said: "As we look around the world, there is plenty to prompt us to far more anger and protest about what happens to children than we often seem to feel or express. This year there have been several public debates about childhood, as research has underlined the lack of emotional security felt by many children, the high cost of divorce and family breakdown, the disproportionate effect of poverty and debt on children, and many other problems."

The Archbishop also pointed to the horrors

visited upon children around the world, such as child soldiers in Africa and Sri Lanka, youngsters caught up in conflicts, and those faced with heavy burdens caused by Aids.

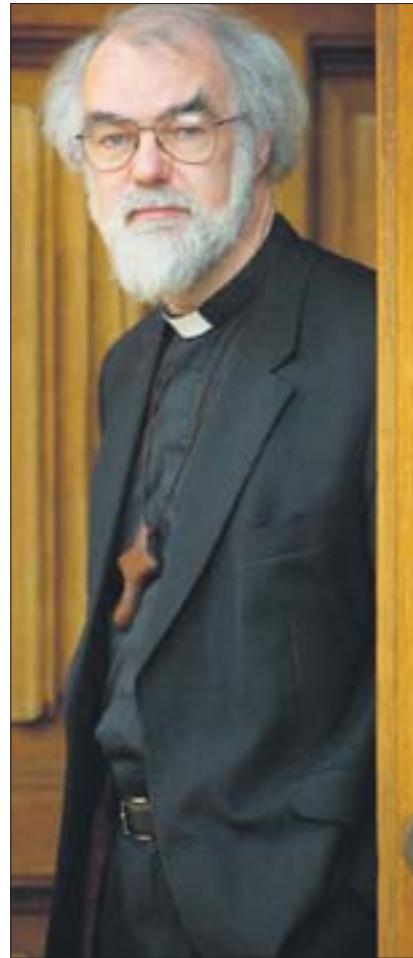
He also railed against the "insensitive treatment" given to child refugees and asylum seekers.

Dr Williams added: "Christmas is a good time to think again about our attitudes to children and about what happens to children in our societies.

"Christians who recognise the infinite and all-powerful God in the vulnerability of a newborn baby have every reason to ask hard questions about the ways in which children come to be despised, exploited, even feared in our world."

"We all suspect that in a time of economic crisis worldwide, it will be the most vulnerable who are left to carry most of the human cost."

"The Holy Child of Bethlehem demands of us that we resist this with all our strength, for the sake of the one who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor, became helpless with the helpless so that he might exalt us all through his mercy and abundant grace."



MESSAGE: Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams says children are despised, exploited and feared in the modern world

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**A remarkable year of highs and lows**

IT'S been another busy year for Canterbury Cathedral as it prepares to welcome packed congregations to its Christmas services.

Tickets for its annual Christmas Eve service were snapped up weeks in advance as worshippers looked to secure a seat for one of the most joyous occasions in the calendar.

Such was the demand that an additional service, 24 hours earlier, was added on a first-come, first-served basis for those missing out on the December 24 carol concert.

Earlier this year, the once-a-decade Lambeth Conference was staged in Canterbury, with some 800 Anglican bishops from across the world making the pilgrimage to the city for

three weeks of discussion and debate on the Church and its policies.

It was not without controversy, however, with some bishops boycotting the event and snubbing the personal invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Key to their concerns was the Church's stance on same-sex marriages and homosexual clergy.

You can watch clips about the Lambeth Conference and take a tour of Canterbury Cathedral itself – including remarkable views across the city from the Bell Harry Tower – by visiting our free broadband TV channel www.yourkenttv.co.uk. Simply search separately for 'lambeth' and 'cathedral'.

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■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

A YOUNGSTER died after being accidentally crushed by his father in a JCB, an inquest has heard.

Bobby-John Eastwood, six, was killed at his family's home in Parbrook Road in High Halstow in August.

An inquest into the boy's death was held on Thursday and was attended by Bobby-John's mother and two close relatives.

The inquest heard how Bobby-John was killed on Wednesday, August 27 shortly after 6pm.

His mother and three younger sisters were inside their home – one of the permanent mobile homes on their land – eating dinner.

Bobby-John's father, Bobby Eastwood, had gone outside to carry out some work with a JCB, moving soil at the rear of the home with the industrial digger.

At some point Bobby-John slipped outside to join his father. Neither his mother nor his father saw him leaving the home.

Minutes later Bobby swung the arm of the JCB and saw young Bobby-John lying on his back on the ground. He had been crushed and suffocated by the digger.

The inquest heard how Bobby-John's mother remembered seeing Bobby running back past the house with their son in his arms shouting: 'I've killed my little boy. I've killed him. What am I going to do?'

Detective Sergeant Curtis, at Medway CID, who was part of the investigating team immediately called to the Eastwood's home, told the inquest: 'All the family members were completely devastated.'

Accident saw father kill his son with JCB

Mid Kent and Medway coroner Roger Sykes said: "This was simply a most tragic accident. Bobby-John died from traumatic asphyxia, as a result of what I can only describe as being crushed by a JCB."

Motionless

"Bobby-John had gone outside the family home unknown to his mother who was preparing the boy and his sisters ready for bed. "Bobby-John's movements were also unknown

to his father, who was doing work on the land in a JCB. He was unaware of what had happened until he saw Bobby-John lying motionless on the ground."

Speaking to Bobby-John's mother, Mr Sykes added: "I can't think of what else I can say. Time will help. You won't forget, but I hope it will become easier as time proceeds."

"I hope your husband is coping and I send my deepest condolences."

• Email yourmedway@kosmedia.co.uk

New road safety scheme

PUPILS from seven primary schools in Medway have signed up to a new road safety scheme.

Youngsters at the schools will be given the title of junior road safety officers and charged with raising awareness of safety issues with fellow pupils.

Medway Council's front line services chief Phil Filmer said: "This is a great scheme to help make school pupils aware of road safety issues."

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ARMY'S CHRISTMAS GIFT

CHARITABLE soldiers helped out Father Christmas by dropping off a sleigh-load of presents at Medway Maritime Hospital's children's ward.

The soldiers from Brompton Barracks handed out the gifts on Tuesday last week – giving the sick youngsters an early Christmas treat.

Medway NHS Foundation Trust's Anne McKinnon said: "Christmas on the ward can be a difficult time for the children and their families and things like this make such a big difference to them – we can't say thank you enough."

"The children were so excited, it's as though Santa has made his delivery early here. I'm not sure they can wait until Christmas day to open them."

The presents were donated at a regimental children's party held by the soldiers earlier this month. Rather than paying an entrance fee, party-goers were asked to bring along a wrapped present for the youngsters at Medway Maritime Hospital.

Child health care 'inadequate'

MEDWAY Council's work in promoting health among children and young people has been rated as 'inadequate' in an annual report.

Ofsted inspectors gave the council's children's service the lowest possible level one score in the 'being healthy' category.

Their in-depth report states that measures taken to reduce the level of teenage pregnancies had been 'unsuccessful' and that there had been a 'lack of progress' in the development of child and adolescent mental health services.

Work on the development of the healthy schools programme was recognised, but the council's in-house analysis of the category was said to have 'overvalued the progress made at this stage'.

Ofsted's overall rating of the effectiveness of Medway's children's services was slightly more positive, receiving an 'adequate' level two grade. The service also picked up 'good' marks in the areas of 'enjoying and achieving', 'making a positive contribution' and 'achieving economic well-being'.

A Medway Council spokesman said the authority accepts Ofsted's findings and is pleased Medway primary care trust had recruited a number of key posts to tackle the issue of teenage pregnancy.

These include a director of public health, a new post of teenage pregnancy co-ordinator, a sexual health manager and three new prevention worker posts focusing on sex and relationship education.

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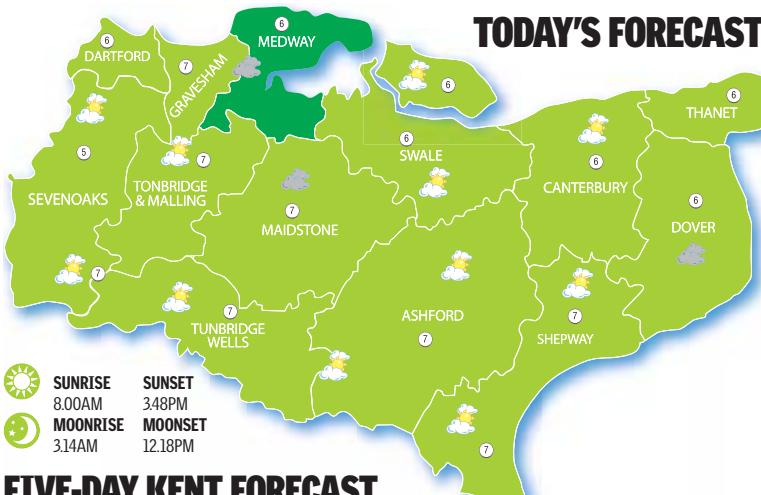


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TODAY'S FORECAST

WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

Chatham	Saturday	9:24am	5.1m
	Sunday	10:25am	5.2m
Dover	Saturday	7:49am	5.7m
	Sunday	8:47am	5.8m
Dungeness	Saturday	7:41am	6.5m
	Sunday	8:35am	6.6m
Ramsgate	Saturday	8:19am	4.3m
	Sunday	9:17am	4.4m
Sheerness	Saturday	9:12am	4.9m
	Sunday	10:14am	5.0m
Whitstable	Saturday	9:17am	4.7m
	Sunday	10:21am	4.8m

FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
Ashford	12°C	13°C	8°C	6°C	7°C
Canterbury	11°C	12°C	7°C	6°C	7°C
Chatham	12°C	12°C	8°C	6°C	7°C
Dartford	13°C	12°C	8°C	7°C	7°C
Dover	10°C	10°C	7°C	6°C	7°C
Faversham	12°C	12°C	8°C	6°C	7°C
Folkestone	10°C	10°C	7°C	6°C	7°C
Gillingham	12°C	12°C	8°C	6°C	7°C

AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	10°C	Madrid	9°C
Athens	14°C	New York	0°C
Barcelona	13°C	Paris	9°C
Beijing	1°C	Rome	14°C
Bombay	30°C	Sydney	19°C
Cape Town	25°C	Tenerife	21°C
Cardiff	11°C	Tokyo	11°C
Gibraltar	14°C	Vancouver	-6°C
Hong Kong	27°C	Warsaw	4°C
Las Palmas	19°C	Wellington	17°C

Great expectations for historic documents

RARE documents detailing the history of Rochester will soon go on display – thanks to a £155,000 Lottery grant.

The cash will give the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre the opportunity to delve into the contents of 500 boxes of the Rochester City Archives – the so-called Archives of Great Expectations.

Medway Council's community services chief Howard Doe said: "Some of the most important archives in the country are held in this collection, relating to Rochester, the second oldest Norman town in England."

"This is great news for MALSC and for the people of Medway, especially students and history enthusiasts, who will benefit from this project when it is completed."

The archive project is expected to last around three years and will be led by a professional archivist, appointed by Medway Council, and two volunteer teams of 16.

The volunteers, including members of the Friends of Medway Archives, will sort, arrange and catalogue the collection, and identify documents requiring conservation and repair.

FOMA chairman Tessa Tower said: "We are absolutely thrilled that in just two years we have achieved so much for MALSC and the award from the Heritage Lottery Fund is a fantastic bonus in these tough financial times."

The archives cover the period 1227 to 1974 and include maps, photographs, building plans, heraldic and manorial records, records of land use, title deeds, rate books, records of trade and industry, public health, and transport.

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Friday	26th December	*Closed*
Saturday	27th December	9.00-5.00
Sunday	28th December	9.30-1.00
Monday	29th December	9.00-5.00
Tuesday	30th December	9.00-5.00
Wednesday	31st December	9.00-4.00
Thursday	1st January	*Closed*
Friday	2nd January	8.30-5.30
Saturday	3rd January	8.30-5.30
Sunday	4th January	9.30-1.00

(Times shown may vary subject to demand)

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QUESTION & ANSWER

FATHER CHRISTMAS



Q&A

Taking five minutes out of his hectic and demanding schedule to speak to **Chris Britcher**, Father Christmas reveals quite what makes him tick as he gets ready for the busiest day of his year.

Q Christmas Eve is almost upon us. Are you ready for your jaunt around the world?

A It's been a tough few months, actually. The credit crunch has hit us all quite hard up here. The cost of magic dust for the sleigh has gone through the roof. You think petrol prices get high – you have no idea! But we'll be ready come Christmas Eve. We always are.

Q How many helpers do you have, and are they really always checking up on everyone's behaviour?

A I am very fortunate to have an extended network of helpers. My happy band of elves work with me, preparing the toys and tending the reindeer, and they are crucial. They work very hard and without them I'd be stuck.

If they're not helping me here, they're keeping an eye out, checking who's been naughty or nice.

We have an extensive – now computerised, of course – list of who gets the good stuff. I also have helpers who go out and impersonate me in shops. As much as I would like to, I simply cannot be everywhere at the same time. Well, apart from on Christmas Eve, of course, but that's magic for you.

Q Do you have a favourite Christmas song?

A I'm rather partial to I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. It's a bit cheeky, isn't it? In truth, I didn't kiss that person's mum – or should I say mom – because, as everyone knows, one of the tricks of the trade is that no one ever sees me. I've always assumed the

person they were kissing just used that as an excuse to get up to something they shouldn't. Mind you, some of the things you get to see while darting from home to home...

Well, let's just say it's not suitable for a family newspaper.

Q Which name do you prefer: Santa Claus, St Nick, Father Christmas? The list goes on...

A In America they do love calling me Santa, and in the UK I know there is a big popularity for Father Christmas. I don't mind, to be honest. What I do object to quite strongly is being called fat. I'm big-boned. I'm jolly. I'm red-faced. I am NOT fat.

Q What do you say to those who question your existence?

A It's very simple. If you doubt me, then don't hang up your stocking on Christmas Eve. I don't mind. It's just one less chimney for me to squeeze down and less weight we have to carry on the sleigh. Have I mentioned the cost of magic dust this year?

Q How are the reindeer? Are they ready for their big night?

A It's a bit like preparing an athlete for the Olympic Games. There's months of training, all building up to the big day when they have to perform. I have quite a herd to choose from and there is, as always, healthy competition for places.

Pulling my sleigh is considered the pinnacle of a reindeer's career; after all. Just take a look

at Rudolph. He was a regular and he makes a small fortune in commercial deals.

Every time you see a cup with his face on it, or a Christmas card, he gets paid. Normally in carrots or grain, but paid none the less. Become a sleigh regular and the rewards really are high.

Q How long do you spend in Kent on your rounds? And what do you think of the county?

A It's a trade secret as to how long I stay there on Christmas Eve, but what I can say is that I have frequently spent a long weekend in the county.

I can never stay anywhere too long as people spot the beard and start whispering. I'd love to stay for a proper holiday, though. It's a beautiful place, full of beautiful people. Most of whom, I might add, appear to have been good this year.

Q You've been doing this for a good few years now. Has retirement crossed your mind?

A It's a bit like Sir Alex Ferguson. There was once a time after a particularly annoying Christmas Eve I thought I'd throw it all in.

Lots of children seemed to almost wake up just as I entered the room, and the number of drunks on the streets was crazy.

But then, just as I think I've had enough, the next year will be great and I forget all the bad things. And, to be honest, where else could you get a job which offers such long holidays? It makes teachers look overworked!

Ho, ho, ho!



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Film highlights the dangers facing us all due to global warming. Search 'NASA'



Tom Howard reviews the week's local football news from around the county. Search 'football'



Julie Maddocks charts the history of one of Kent's best-known breweries. Search 'Fremants'



Santa Claus lets the train take the strain ahead of his busiest day of the year. Search 'Tenterden'



The best job in the world? Kent's very own Willy Wonka shares his secrets. Search 'Chocolution'

EDITOR'S CHOICE

You can view all these videos and others from around the county with the click of a mouse at...
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Don't wait until spring to put up that birdbox

BY NICK AMES

THE Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has launched a winter appeal to gardeners.

Garden birds use nestboxes as shelter during the winter as well as for raising fledglings in spring, and the RSPB is appealing to people across the county to put boxes up in the right place now, ready for winter roosting.

Nestboxes don't always go unused in winter, as many believe, and gardens may have some unexpected winter guests.

During the autumn and winter many birds will enter nestboxes looking for a suitable place to roost or feed. They then often use the same boxes for nesting in the spring.

But positioning them wrongly could lead to young birds baking to death if exposed to too much sunlight when the days warm up in spring.

Hester Phillips, of RSPB South East, said: "It might seem very early to be thinking about siting your nestbox, but as well as using them to shelter from the cold, birds will actually start shopping around for suitable nest sites soon, too. Birds often use nestboxes as a place

to roost or store food in winter. An amazing 61 wrens have been found roosting in one nestbox to shelter from the cold. The warmth generated in a communal roost can really save them in harsh winters."

"It's also essential that you choose the right place for your box. Please don't put them up on any old bit of wall or fence."

The direction is very important. Unless there are trees or buildings which shade the box during the day, they need to be facing between north and east to protect them from overheating in strong summer sunshine.

"This will also shelter them from our prevailing damp south-westerly winds."

Other tips include:

- Make sure birds have a clear flight-path to the nest without clutter directly in front of the entrance.
- Most nestboxes should not be located too close to the ground or on a fence or shed, where cats can lurk.
- Boxes for robins and wrens, however, should not be too high and are best placed among greenery to give additional protection from predators and the elements.
- If you have more than one nestbox, site them as far apart as possible as many birds like their own space and are highly territorial during the breeding season.



BOX CLEVER: Winter roosting sites are important to birds

More than they bargained for as danger toys seized in raids

A CHRISTMAS crackdown by Kent Trading Standards officers led to the seizure of more than 2,000 potentially dangerous toys.

They formed part of a larger haul of almost 4,500 counterfeit items that also included clothing and footwear.

Officers seized the goods during raids at five premises in Snodland last week, with stock also taken from people using online auction sites from properties in Thanet and Romney Marsh.

Cllr Mike Hill, cabinet member for community services at Kent County Council, said: "These latest raids have helped save consumers money and protected children from receiving fake and possibly dangerous toys this Christmas."

"We are all attracted by bargains and these traders have been cashing in on that."

"At a time when businesses are feeling the pinch, too, it is important that action is taken against unscrupulous individuals and organisations."

The seized toys are currently being tested for safety, with the alleged offenders being dealt with on suspicion of the sale of counterfeit goods.



YOUTH THEATRE: The Marlowe in Canterbury will be one of the venues to benefit

Stage is set for the next generation

THE Arts Council is funding a pioneering scheme over the next two years aimed at increasing theatre attendance by those aged under 26.

Theatres across the county will benefit from the plan to boost the popularity of live performances among young people by offering free admission.

Grants totaling £310,000 will fund the plan across the South East, where 22 theatres have been earmarked.

The free theatre scheme will start on Monday, February 16, and a website for booking tickets will start up in the new year. Arts Council regional head Judith Hibberd said: "We must make it easy for young people to experience powerful and inspiring art, show them that

the arts are for them and hopefully help create a new generation of arts audiences."

Mark Everett, director of the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury, which has been offered £50,000, said: "Young people will be at the heart of the new Marlowe Theatre and this award will support essential early work to develop these new audiences."

Also in Kent, a £10,000 grant has been offered to both the Assembly Hall Theatre in Tunbridge Wells and the Performing Arts Network Kent Consortia, which includes the Gulbenkian Theatre in Canterbury, Trinity Theatre in Tunbridge Wells and the Theatre Royal Margate.

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Here's a few sobering thoughts

BY NICK AMES

POLICE across the county have secured significant convictions to provide a sobering reminder about road safety and the consequences of breaking the law.

The convictions come as Kent Police reaches the half way stage of its Christmas anti-drink and drug driving campaign which is using cutting edge technology and new tactics to detect rogue drivers.

To date, since the campaign started on December 1:

- A total of 143 people have been arrested for drink or drug driving
- Three people have been jailed for death by dangerous driving
- There have been nine fatal, or potentially fatal, collisions
- Of the above, four people have died.

In one of the cases, a motorist on a lifetime driving ban in Ireland, who killed a 52-year-old Sheerness man in a motorway collision, has been jailed for nine years. Stephen O'Reilly reached speeds of more than 110mph shortly before the collision, on the M2 near Sittingbourne, in June, this year.

He was also drinking beer at the wheel. Head of the serious collision investigation unit, Inspector Paul Sellwood, said: "This has been a lengthy investigation for the unit, involving close working with the police and



NINE YEARS:
Stephen O'Reilly



£1,000 FINE:
David Hoskins



TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES: Dangerous driving and flouting the law can devastate lives – and will not be tolerated, say Kent Police

courts in the Republic of Ireland. We are very satisfied for the family with the outcome. O'Reilly is a career criminal who has not only given a family a life sentence but he will also have to live with the consequences of his driving for the rest of his life."

In another case, Maidstone businessman David Hoskins pleaded guilty to allowing his employee, Martin Crealock, to drive a work vehicle when it wasn't insured for him to drive.

Hoskins received a £1,000 fine and was made to pay £365 costs. He was also given six

penalty points on his licence.

This is the first time Kent Police can recall anyone receiving the maximum fine and penalty points for permitting another person to drive uninsured.

Martin Crealock was sentenced earlier this year at Maidstone Crown Court, where he received 15 months in jail and was disqualified from driving for four years.

Finally, two police officers were seriously injured when their marked car was hit from behind by 27-year-old Lee Staples, in April.

It was parked on the hard shoulder at junc-

tion two of the M2 coast-bound carriageway with all the necessary emergency lighting.

The collision was so serious the officers had to be cut from the wreckage by the Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Staples couldn't give a reasonable reason for colliding with the police vehicle and alcohol and drug abuse were ruled out.

He was subsequently reported for careless driving and pleaded guilty. He was fined £400 and had to pay £60 court costs and a £15 victim surcharge. He was also disqualified from driving for 12 months.

Helping businesses weather the storm

BUSINESSES struggling amid the economic downturn have been told to push ahead in the new year with confidence.

Kent County Council chiefs have underlined their commitment to supporting local industry and cabinet member for regeneration Kevin Lynes says it intends to transform the county into what he's dubbed 'the Garden of Enterprise'.

Cllr Lynes outlined the policies he hopes will help the county weather

the downturn. He said: "Successful businesses create wealth, jobs and opportunities in the county. KCC has a key role in the Kent economy. It is a major employer and spends £860m annually on goods and services.

"We want the Kent economy to grow and develop – for Kent to be the Garden of Enterprise."

It comes after KCC leader Paul Carter recently unveiled a host of measures to support local business.

Cllr Lynes said: "We want to develop a new relationship with business, an honest and practical relationship which delivers further support to increase opportunities and growth.

"We therefore set out ten commitments under the banner Backing Kent Business. These commitments are KCC's promise for a step change in how we support Kent business.

"I am determined to deliver these commitments to support Kent business."

Spiking victim's warning to party people

PARTYGOERS are being warned of the dangers of drink-spiking by a woman who became a victim.

Francesca Fraser, 22, has been handing out posters and drinks mats to pubs and clubs across the county to raise awareness.

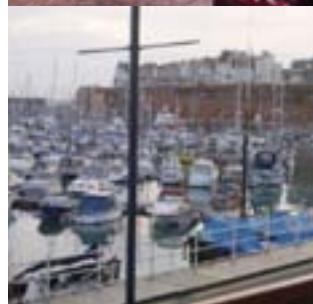
Spiking is on the increase according to campaigners, who say many people do not realise how dangerous it can be.

Ms Fraser, who was given a cup of tea spiked with ecstasy, said the smoking ban had meant more people leaving drinks unattended.

She said: "People need to make sure they have their drink with them at all times and try not to leave it anywhere when they want a cigarette."

She has also been giving out brightly-coloured bottle stoppers, which only allow a straw for drinking. "The stoppers cost just 2p," she said. "We want to make pubs and clubs aware they are inexpensive and can lower the risk of drinks being spiked."

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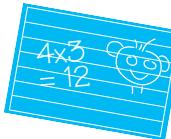
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BREAK TIME



ON THE ROAD: Ashley Parnell looks to London for Dick and his magic cat Tommy played by Matthew Nicholls at MidKent College

Dramatic success for pantomime

FIRST year performing arts students have been wowing packed-out audiences with their panto production of Dick Whittington.

The MidKent College national diploma group gave six performances of the show last week, thrilling audiences of all ages.

Visitors to the matinee performances included residents from Brightlands Care Home, 300 pupils from Warren Wood Primary School and students from the Marlborough Centre – a specialist school for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Tickets for the evening performances were sold out.

Talented Ashley Parnell, 19, who played the lead role of Dick Whittington, said she was pleased with the run: "We've all done really well and I'm thrilled that the show has gone down so well."

"Our audiences have been great and everyone's had a brilliant time."

Preparations for the show began in September.

Next year's panto will be performed at the college's new £86 million Medway campus in Gillingham.

Ouststanding grade from the inspectors

■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

OFSTED inspectors have rated Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School as 'outstanding' for the second time in three years.

The Rochester grammar school was described as one of the country's top performers – after securing level one grades in all categories.

Inspector Joan Greenfield said: "This is an outstanding school. Students thrive within its distinctive ethos, enabling them to succeed academically and to develop into confident, well-rounded individuals who are prepared extremely well for their future lives."

"Pupils make outstanding progress. Standards are exceptionally high throughout, as shown by the national test results in year nine, and the GCSE and A-level examinations."

"Central to the rapid progress students make is the high quality teaching and guidance they receive from staff, and the careful assessment and checking of their progress."

"The high proportion of good and often excellent teaching in lessons and the unstinting support students receive ensures almost all achieve outstandingly well."

"Building on its existing strengths, the new headteacher has clearly articulated the correct priorities for the school's further development."

"These include a relentless focus on raising standards further, improving teaching and learning, and sharpening the quality of leadership."



WELL DONE: A-level results day saw success for students at Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School ship and management, especially of middle leaders."

Headteacher Dr Gary Holden said he was delighted with the report, saying: "This report is a formal recognition of the commitment of all who work at the school to ensure our students enjoy their education and achieve to the best of their ability."

"It is also a testament to the extremely positive attitudes to learning demonstrated by our students and to their parents' unstinting support."

Chairman of governors Mick Costello added: "I extend my warmest thanks and congratulations to the headteacher, his leadership team and to the teaching and support staff for this well deserved success."

"As governors we are all very proud to be associated with the school."

To further improve the school needs to continue to challenge the most able students to ensure more of them attain the highest grade in GCSE and A-level examinations possible.

OFSTED MARKS

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- Achievement & standards
- Its Personal development and well-being
- The quality of provision

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Goodwill to all men is once again a part of the season

I AM very much of the opinion that Christmas is the best, most exciting time of the year.

I find little to dislike about it. Everyone's mood is lifted, the lights and the tinsel remind me of a happy childhood, my children are all keen to ingratiate themselves with me in order to get nice pressies, and the TV actually has something on worth watching most nights.

However, in recent years, the true spirit of Christmas has been diluted. Aside from the religious overtones and the age-old pagan traditions of this time of year, the great capitalism monster has turned it into a money-making frenzy. Nothing necessarily wrong with that, but an issue when it eclipses everything else.

Much has been written in years gone by on how commercialism is taking the soul out of this special period. But this year, amid all the doom, gloom and uncertainty which the economic downturn has dragged with it, has come

something of a refreshing change.

Because given everyone is either watching the pennies, or simply wondering where the next penny is going to come from, the crassest of commercial activity has been knocked on the head this year.

The result? We haven't all been told we are failing as parents/partners/friends if we don't splash out on some extravagant gift as a gesture of our love.

Even the most money-grabbing of multinational brands know the climate is not right for such a campaign. And few can afford such items anyway.

A bit of clever shopping around, and taking advantage of sales, you can even come out of this shopping frenzy with your credit card bill confined to just a couple of pages.

We have all been left with the feeling that, just for once, we are going to have to enjoy Christmas on a very traditional level - going back to basics, if you will.

Yes, this year we are going to be having to rely on those old chestnuts of fellow human

company to put a spring in our step.

Of family, of friends, of each other.

And without wishing to come over all Thought For A Day-ey, that can be no bad thing.

Granted, being in close proximity to friends and particularly family, can unsettle even the most placid of people, but who knows, the fact we are all in this boat of uncertainty, sailing the choppy waters of the economic storm, could actually generate something of a Blitz spirit.

It could bring us all a little closer together.

And if anything good is to come out of this miserable time of worries and fears, a gentle reminder of the goodness which resides in one another and all of mankind, could be just the tonic.

I'll certainly raise a glass of something cheap and sparkly to that.

• **EDITOR'S NOTE:** All blogs are supplied with full name and address of the authors. They do not reflect the view of the newspaper but are designed to give our readers the chance to air their views.

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Sat 3	London January Sales	£10	Sun 1	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Mon 2	Monday Special – Ghent – by Tunnel	£20
Wed 7	Bluewater or Lakeside	£10	Thu 5	Greenwich Maritime Museum New	£15	Wed 4	National Gallery & Picasso Exhibition New	£29
Sat 10	Lille Sales – by Tunnel	£19	Sat 7	London Showtime	fr £54	Fri 6	Dirty Dancing	£59
Sat 10	London Boat Show 55th Anniversary New	£27	Mon 9	Monday Special – Ostend & St Flora – by Tunnel	£20	Sat 7	The Secret World Of Bletchley Park New	£29
Sat 10	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Wed 11	Lunch At Moulin Snick, St Omer – by Tunnel	£40	Sun 8	Crofts Dog Show	£40
Sun 11	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Thu 12	Raf Museum London New	£15	Tue 10	Paris In Springtime – by Tunnel	£40
Wed 14	London Museums	£15	Sat 14	Valentines Love Is In The Air – London Eye & Chocolates	£39	Wed 11	Lunch At Moulin Snick, St Omer – by Tunnel	£40
Sat 17	Cirque Du Soleil "Quidam"	£85	Sun 15	London Eye, Lunch & River Cruise	£59	Thu 12	Milestones Living History Museum New	£25
Sat 17	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Tue 17	London Zoo	£29	Sun 15	Bruges or Sluis – by Tunnel	£30
Sun 18	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Wed 18	Kew Gardens Tropical Plants 250th Anniversary	£30	Tue 17	Windsor Lunch Cruise New	£35
Sun 18	Bruges or Sluis – by Tunnel	£30	Thu 19	Boulogne & Hypermarket – by Tunnel	£25	Thu 19	Wisley Gardens At Springtime	£25
Wed 21	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Sat 21	Disneyland® Resort Paris – by Tunnel	£65	Sat 21	London Showtime	fr £54
Thu 22	The Musical Museum With Lunch New	£29	Sun 22	Bruges or Sluis – by Tunnel	£30	Sat 21	Hampton Court Floramania New } Mothers Day	£30
Sat 24	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Tue 24	Imperial War Museum & Ian Fleming Exhibition (James Bond)	£25	Sun 22	London Eye, Lunch & River Cruise Mothers Day	£59
Sun 25	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39	Wed 25	Sound Of Music	£49	Sun 22	Classical Spectacular with lunch	£83
Sun 25	London Eye, Lunch & River Cruise	£59	Thu 26	Mystery Day	£15	Tue 24	Arras – by Tunnel	£25
Mon 26	Monday Special – Ypres & St Flora – by Tunnel	£20	Sat 28	Lakeside or Romford Market	£17	Wed 25	Kew Gardens At Springtime 250th Anniversary	£30
Tue 27	Pussycat Dolls At The O2 Arena	£59				Thu 26	Ideal Home Show	£30
Wed 28	Mystery Day With Lunch	£20				Sat 28	Disney Live – Mickey's Magic Show New	£39
Thu 29	London & Royal Opera House Tour New	£30				Sat 28	Ideal Home Show	£30
Sat 31	Holiday On Ice Brighton "Mystery"	£39				Sun 29	Ideal Home Show	£30
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yourcompetition

WIN a VIP family trip around Port Lympne

Picture ADYKERY

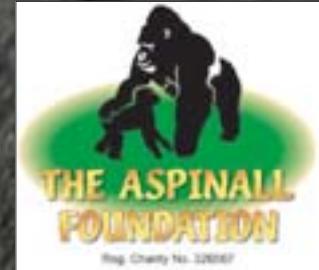
THE Aspinall Foundation, in conjunction with KOS Media are offering one lucky family a VIP trip around Port Lympne Wild Animal Park.

This will include free entry to the park and a trip in a bespoke safari vehicle around the African Experience where over 300 animals roam in a 100 acre site overlooking breathtaking views of the Channel towards France. Later, the lucky winners can explore the 600 acre park discovering animals such as lions, tigers, snow and clouded leopards, red pandas, numerous species of monkey, black rhino and elephants as well as the famous collection of western lowland gorillas.

There are two ways to enter the competition and the first ensures, with little effort on your part, you are able to regularly help raise funds to save a variety of endangered species.

All you have to do is sign up for a free Aspinall prepaid Maestro card provided in conjunction with Mastercard and M-cube. Normally the prepaid card costs £9.99, but in conjunction with this competition it won't cost you a penny.

The card can be used like a debit card but is topped up like a mobile phone and 100 per cent of the profits associated with using it are given back to the Aspinall Foundation.



available too. The card is totally safe for all online transactions and protects you from identity fraud. It also gives you a load of discounts on High Street products including a 10 per cent discount in Howletts and Port Lympne cafes and gift shops.

To enter the competition and obtain this card just visit www.savinggorillas.com and insert "KOS" when asked where you heard about the card. In the drop down box below insert "KOS". On receipt of the card you can top it up online and take advantage of the rewards on offer. It can be used anywhere you see the Maestro or MasterCard logo worldwide.

However, if you don't want to sign up for the card you can also still enter the competition by sending a postcard with the heading "ASPINALL PREPAID CARD - KOS" with your name, e-mail address (if applicable), address, and daytime telephone number to Marketing Department (KOS comp), Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, Lympne, Near Hythe, Kent, CT21 4PD. The closing date is January 5th, 2009.

For more information about Howletts, Port Lympne and the Aspinall Foundation see www.totallywild.net.

No purchase necessary. For our full terms and conditions see www.kentnews.co.uk or call 01303 817073. If you do not wish to receive any literature please write 'no literature' on your entry.

The VIP trip around Port Lympne is for a family of up to two adults and three children.



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yourletters

TALK TIME

RICHARD KNOX-JOHNSTON

The new chairman of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Kent talks about protecting all the natural areas in the county.

How do you see your new role and what has been done previously that you can build on?

CPRE has seen major development during the last five years under former chairman Gary Thomas. We are now in a very strong position with respect to the planning system. My new role, in the main, is to facilitate our fantastic sub-committees and executive committee members to continue to provide ideas and policies for the future of Kent. I also want to build and expand our membership base, particularly to younger people.

You must be honoured to have such a role, protecting our most important natural assets?

Yes, I feel extremely privileged to have been elected chairman for what is considered to be one of the strongest branches of CPRE in the country. We have a very dedicated team of staff, members and supporters who bring a variety of expertise to our charity but we always need fresh ideas from new people who want to get involved in the work we do at CPRE Kent.

What are your immediate plans and how are you going to get across the role of the organisation?
It was decided a long time ago that what the CPRE does not effectively describe what we do and is not known to Kent people. We have created a new brand which we will be launching in the spring of next year. This will better encompass what we do and support my view that we are responsible for the whole of Kent – not just the rural areas.

What are the most important issues in Kent and nationwide affecting the countryside?

Climate change and its effects is one of the biggest issues. CPRE Kent is holding an alternative energy conference in January to promote alternative energy people can use in their homes.



YOUR LETTERS

Bring on the Villa for happy new year

I can't wait for Christmas to be over, because that's when the real party will start. Why, you ask?

Well, it's when Gillingham FC will entertain Premiership side Aston Villa in the FA Cup at Priestfield – live on television.

This is a chance for everyone to see what us fans already know, that the Gills are the greatest and always will be.

Robert Gibb,
from Gillingham by email

Performance was truly entertaining

At the recent scrutiny meeting on the future of Chatham Education, we were invited by pupils at Medway Community College (MCC) to watch their upcoming production of Bugsy Malone.

We were extremely pleased to have gone along for a great night's entertainment, with fantastic energy and effort from performers, musicians and all the backstage team.

It is no surprise music is being discussed as a possible specialism for the new Chatham

school, as clearly there is a lot of talent already at MCC.

Congratulations to all involved.

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Times have changed but Woolies hasn't
While it is sad to see Woolworths in terrible condition, I do like that they are still open as completely bad news. I miss it as the soul of a town.

Cheap goods were excellent value

Regarding the letter from Rebecca Watson on the demise of Woolworths on December 10, it sounds as though her knowledge only goes back to the 70s.

Terrible music?! Many of the groups and stars of the 70s are still playing, with young people still enjoying their performances.

Woolworths 'trashy'?! I am of an age to remember the five and ten cent stores coming to town as 'nothing over six pence' in the 20s.

Trashy goods – I am still using kitchen utensils which my mother bought. I can still decorate a Christmas tree with items bought for pennies, also paperchains, even a small artificial tree.

I realise it is because money was almost non-existent so things were treasured, all carefully packed away in boxes (original ones).

Our six penny records worked just as well as CDs. Yes, I still have some! I also have an Esater present I bought for my mother, a painted wooden vase containing celluloid crocus. Not plastic – cost three pence.

I am sure I am not the only person who has articles bought at the wonderland called Woolworths before the 70s.

Ms Watson says it was a time of strikes, rubbish footballers, rotten hair cuts, and I've already mentioned rubbish music.

It was after the 70s that these things came about. The whole of

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Clrs Dorte Gilry and Vince Maple,
from Medway Labour Group,
by email.



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Britain was a rubbish place – with skinheads, racism and football violence.

Surely she is writing of this day and age with its strikes, violence (murders), drugs, recession, with money a god.

"Shoppers have become too sophisticated for Woolworths." What utter balderdash.

Do her words apply to all the other stores and firms now closing down? Where does she shop?

We had excellent coffee bars, cafes, fish and chip shops, and good friends in the 'bad old days'.

G Hall,
from Strood, by email.

What price a little Woolies empathy?

How upsetting it must have been for employees of Woolworths to watch as shoppers scrambled for bargains when they knew they were about to lose their jobs.

Have the people who grabbed these so-called bargains no thought for the feelings of those who were losing their jobs at Christmas?

Tracey Lewis,
from Chatham by email

Finally, recognition policing was wrong

Vernon Coaker, minister at the Home Office, has been forced to apologise publicly for misleading statements about policing at Kingsnorth.

He has had to retract his claim 70

police officers were injured by protesters. Only 12 police officers had 'reportable injuries,' and those were mainly insect bites and cut fingers. This does not provide evidence of violence and does not justify the excessive policing at the Climate Camp.

I was one of many who complained about the over-zealous policing at Kingsnorth.

My main worry is that Kent residents who were horrified at the excessive policing they witnessed and will have lost faith in the police.

Policing in a democracy relies on the cooperation and support of the population. Once trust is lost it is extremely difficult to regain it.

The behaviour of the police contributed to a loss of trust in them by ordinary people. The misleading statement by the minister will exacerbate that loss of trust.

The minister will be meeting with the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss "the lessons to be learned" from Kingsnorth.

I hope he will take into account the long term relationship of the police with those whose cooperation they so badly need and will conclude that future peaceful demonstrations should be policed more sensitively than was the case at Kingsnorth.

Dr Hazel Dawe,
chair of Kent Green Party, by email.

Challenge yourself for a good cause

As a World, Commonwealth, and Olympic gold medallist I know all about setting goals and taking on



challenges, even when they might seem impossible. That's why I would encourage anyone looking for a challenge to sign up for one of Marie Curie Cancer Care's wonderful Rise to the Challenge events.

The programme has something for everyone both at home and abroad; from treks in the Peruvian Andes to walking in the Lake District, as well as abseiling at some of the UK's most stunning sites. And of course, my favourite, cycle challenges such as Cork to Dublin or the Canadian Rockies, so if the cycling doesn't leave you breathless the scenery will!

So no matter where you are, what your age or ability, you can get fit and active with Marie Curie Cancer Care. And what makes taking on these challenges all the more worthwhile is that the money you raise will make it possible for people who are terminally ill to be cared for and spend their last days in the comfort of their own homes, surrounded by family and friends.

I have had personal experiences of cancer within my own family and I understand the huge difference this choice can make.

My next cycling challenge will be the World Championships in 2009, but I also hope I will succeed in inspiring you to take on an event for Marie Curie Cancer Care this year; these will be my own personal challenges. What will yours be?

See www.mariecurie.org.uk/challenge for inspiration or call 08700 340040.

Chris Hoy, Olympic triple gold medallist in Beijing 2008 and BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2008, by email.

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Current best seller is marinated fillet steak on sweet potato rosti and garnish, which has become a firm favourite with the discerning diners.

Outdoor dining and a marquee are popular in summer, with winter offering the opportunity for warm and cozy dining in a stylish interior.

The chef and second chef have years of experience in hotels and restaurants, and ensure every visit is a memorable one for customers.

They also have a wide knowledge of food from around the globe, having worked in many countries.

The Owl is open for breakfast and morning tea from 9am until 11.30am and lunch is served from noon until 3pm.

Snacks and bar food are available all afternoon and dinner is served from 6.30pm until late.

The venue has acquired a glowing reputation and is popular with diners from across the Medway area and far beyond.

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Winter warmer in the pub

The Darnley Arms

FOUND in Cobham, this is a village pub in an area famous for its orchards and spectacular views of the countryside.

The pub has a lot of history and the nearby village church has some of the best brass work in the country.

But it also has plenty to offer lovers of good food and drink, with walkers and luncheon groups particularly welcome.

A two courses for £6 special offer is particularly popular with lunch time diners and a monthly fish menu is extremely popular – so booking is advisable.

There is also a monthly quiz night and accommodation is offered in the form of a recently converted hayloft which has three en-suite twin rooms.

Current best seller on the menu is steak and kidney pudding with suet pastry – ideal for cold days and winter nights.

Groups and organisations are also welcome, with parties of around 50 easily catered for.

Customers return time and time again to sample some of the best dishes around in surroundings which are warm and comfort-



able, served by keen and friendly staff who know their dishes and drinks to perfection.

The pub is open from 11am until 2.30pm and then from 6pm until 11pm from Monday to Saturday, and from noon until 3.30pm on Sundays.

A fresh key to success

The See Ho

THIS is a friendly, busy country pub which serves great beers and a vast range of home prepared dishes.

Early bird specials, dinners, Sunday roasts and fresh fish are all items which have attracted customers to the menu, which is varied and uses as much local produce as possible.

There is live music on a Thursday night and an exciting quiz on a Sunday evening.

Small or large groups are all catered for and the pub is particularly popular with hikers who enjoy the excellent local landscape.

They regularly book tables for up to 20 and 30 walkers to eat and drink after long stretches of enjoying the countryside.

The See Ho has been an institution in the Medway area for many years and is open from 11am until 3pm and then from 6pm until 11pm each day.

Current top sellers on the menu are homemade rabbit pie, homemade steak in ale pie, fillet steak and lamb shank.

All of the dishes are complemented by excellent beers and wines, which the knowledgeable staff ensure are kept perfectly.

Fresh food at very reasonable prices is the



key to the success of the venue, which attracts custom from far and wide because of its excellent reputation and fine location.



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The See Ho

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The Village

With a new menu on the way and Christmas and New Year celebrations, The Village Hotel is the place to be. Favourites are the grilled rump of lamb served with creamed white beans and spinach. Another hot favourite is the prime 8oz fillet steak served on your own personal hot rock, you can cook at your table, meaning every mouthful is sizzling hot and done to perfection!

The Darnley Arms

Large mushrooms with Welsh rarebit crust to start. Followed by steak and kidney pudding with a choice of vegetables. Then apple pie and custard.

The Barn

Start with steamed baby suet pudding of local rabbit and veal with chanterelle mushrooms and veloute of artichokes. Then rump of English lamb finished with pancetta and leek and tarragon dumplings with winter vegetables. Dessert: sticky toffee pudding with rum and raisin parfait.

The Wild Duck Inn

This year's Christmas menu is home cured gravadlax with honey and mustard dressing followed by poached salmon steak with a white wine and coriander sauce. Complete the meal with cheese, biscuits, grapes and celery followed by mince pies and coffee.

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HE'S BEHIND YOU! Aladdin is at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells. Below left, King of the Jungle Joe Swash is Buttons in Cinderella at the Central Theatre, Chatham, while Steve Guttenberg comes all the way from Hollywood to Bromley to star in Cinderella

Festive fun for families

Yell your way around the county's pantos

FAMILY fun is in plentiful supply this Christmas with an array of pantomimes across the county.

Emma Barton, who played Honey in EastEnders, stars alongside children's TV favourite Stephen Mulhern and local legend Dave Lee in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

The show runs at The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, until Sunday, January 18. Phone 01227 787787, or book online at www.marlowetheatre.com.

Jack and the Beanstalk at the Hazlitt Theatre, Maidstone, stars former Hollyoaks actor Jake Hendriks, who played Father Kieron in the teen soap. Catch him in action until Sunday, January 4. Tickets are avail-

able from 01622 758611 or www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk.

The cast of Dick Whittington is ready to take audiences at the Leas Cliff Hall, Folkestone, on a journey to find the streets paved with gold. Kate Wright is Dick, while Bob Osborne plays Sarah the Cook and Natalie Hubbard is Captain Cods Eye. Tickets for the show, which runs until Saturday, January 10, are available from 0870 4000890 or www.leascliffhall.org.uk.

Local actor Alex Tomkins is in Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves at the Theatre Royal Margate until Saturday, January 3. To book, phone 01227 877787 or 0845 1301786.

The Bill's Chris Ellison pounds a new beat as the dastardly Abanazar in Aladdin at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells. He stars alongside GMTV's Toonattik's Anna Williamson until Sunday, January 4. Phone 01892 530613/532072, or see www.assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk.

The Central Theatre in Chatham is staging Cinderella this year and I'm A Celebrity... star Joe Swash swings in to play Buttons until Sunday, January 4. Phone 01634 338338, or see www.medway.gov.uk/theatres.

Captain Hook's sidekick Smee is played by Joe Pasquale in Peter Pan at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford. Enjoy the fun until Sunday, January

FAMILY PANTOMIME FUN

Various dates
Various venues, countywide



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Captain Hook's sidekick Smee is played by Joe Pasquale in Peter Pan at the Orchard Theatre, Dartford. Enjoy the fun until Sunday, January



11. For tickets, phone 01322 220000, or see www.orchardtheatre.co.uk.

Dick Whittington shoulders his backpack at the Granville Theatre, Ramsgate, until Sunday, January 4. For tickets, phone 01843 591750.

Polytechnic Academy star Steve Guttenberg is in Cinderella at The Churchill in Bromley. He is playing alongside comedienne Helen Lederer until Sunday, January 18. Phone the box office on 0870 060 6620, or book at www.churchilltheatre.co.uk.

Former Big Brother housemate Paul 'Bubble' Ferguson stars in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at the Swallows Leisure Centre, Sittingbourne.

The show which runs until Sunday, December 28, also features CBBC's Tracy Beaker star Ben Hanson and Briony Price, who rose to fame on How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria? To book, call 01795 420420.



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with
JANE CONNOLLY
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SAFARI

Thursday, January 1
Port Lympne
Wild Animal Park, near Hythe

START the New Year by connecting with nature on a breathtaking safari at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park.

Following the excesses of Christmas, a ride in the park's specially commissioned vehicle would be just the way to blow away the cobwebs.

Discover the many animals roaming free in the 100-acre African Experience site, against the backdrop of stunning views across Romney Marsh towards France.

Visitors could spot giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, ostrich, black rhino, sitatunga, blue wildebeest, eland, Defassa waterbuck, red lechwe, Grant's and Grevy's zebras and more.

Each safari tour will be accompanied by a guide who will answer questions about conservation projects and the animals. Set in 600 acres, the park is home to the largest breeding herd of



Picture: MEDWAY LEISURE

black rhinos outside Africa and its group of 25 western lowland gorillas welcomed its newest baby just weeks ago.

Safaris leave at 10am and midday, and places must be booked in advance.

Tickets cost £12 for adults, £9 for children and are free for under-fours, with discounts for groups of six or more.

For more information, you can visit www.totallywild.net, or phone 01303 264647.

mammoth evening of top tunes and festive fun.

So, music fans, escape the family game of Monopoly and head for the dance-floor to work off those mince pies.

In Room 1, resident DJs Graeme Doyle and Liam K will be playing the best in indie and electro, while in Room 2 Paul Richards of local band One Day Elliott will join Dan Slope, star of Five's hit series Human Guinea Pigs, to showcase their rock, emo and heavy-metal sounds.

With some great drinks deals, I Should Coco is gearing up for another night of great entertainment on a credit-crunching budget.

Entry costs £4 before 11pm and £5 after, with a £1 discount for NUS members.

For more information, call 07739 713890 or email jeff@club-class.org.

You can find out more about other upcoming events online at www.myspace.com/ishouldcocomaidstone.

I SHOULD COCO BOXING DAY MASKED BALL

Friday, December 26
The Loft, Maidstone

CLUBBERS can expect to bump into anyone from Batman to Fonejacker at a special event on Boxing Day.

The I Should Coco Boxing



Picture: MARTIN ELLIOTT

FRANCES KNIGHT

Wednesday, December 31
Harbour Café Bar, Margate

WELCOME the New Year in the company of acclaimed jazz pianist Frances Knight.

The Canterbury-based performer has been involved in the London and South East jazz scene for many years and has impressed critics with her fantastic musical skills.

She has written, performed and recorded with artists such as Jan Ponsford, Sarah Jane Morris, Paul Booth and Tony Coe.

Showing a taste for the exotic, Knight also plays with London's hottest Argentinian tango band Los Mareados. She also studies the bandoneon, a small accordion popular in Latin America.

Her appearance is the latest in a new series of concerts linked to the famous Vortex Jazz Club in London.

Floor singers are invited to take part in the gig and it would be an impressive addition to any CV to say they had performed with Frances Knight. For more information, phone the venue on 01843 290110.

Tickets for the New Year's Eve event cost £36, including a three-course dinner. Phone or visit the Harbour Café Bar to book.

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MEDWAY LEISURE

Talented acts line up to entertain in the lounge

ENJOY the break between Christmas and New Year at the Grey Lady Music Lounge in Tunbridge Wells.

The twice-weekly showcase of talent, Paul Dunton and Guests, will welcome Mechanical Sunrise, Henry Willard, Tehillah Commission and headliners Hoath to the venue in The Pantiles on Sunday. The event starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £4. For details see www.myspace.com/paulduntonandguests or www.thegreylady.co.uk.

See in the New Year at a fabulous VIP party

FEEL Full Length and Fabulous this New Year's Eve at the G Casino at Westwood Cross, Broadstairs.

The casino's party will offer VIP treatment to guests, who will be welcomed with champagne, a photo shoot, a magician, a live band and a disco. There will be a buffet and the chance to party into the New Year with an ABBA tribute show and late barbecue.

Tickets cost £50, with £5 from each going to the Pilgrim's Hospice. Phone 01843 579999, or see www.gcasino.co.uk.

New Year's Eve party is right up your street

NEW Year's Eve will be celebrated in style at the Orange Street Music Venue in Canterbury.

The act had yet to be confirmed at the time of writing, but there will be quality live music to help revellers usher in 2009. People can also expect good food, fine wine, champagne, drinks offers and good company to welcome the New Year. The party starts at 8pm – see www.orangestreetmusic.com.

Fun for all the family at laughter pantomime

JOIN Simple Simon for some traditional fun in the family show Little Bo Peep: The Laughter Pantomime.

Presented by Gordon Clarkson, the show features a talented cast performing lots of song, dance and comedy with audience participation, too.

Little Bo Peep will provide festive fun for the family. The show will be at Westgate Pavilion, Westgate-on-Sea, from Boxing Day to December 28. Tickets cost £8/£4. Phone 01843 835611.

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Sequin peep-toe sandals, price £25

MEDWAY SHOPPING

Last-minute present buying's a close shave

ANYONE searching for a last-minute Christmas present could give the gift of immaculate grooming with Remington.

Women can tame their locks and create a fantastic hair-do with the Professional Pro Curl Tong (£24.99), or enjoy sleek skin with the EP5000 Bodycurve Dual Head Epilator (£49.99), which doubles as a shaver and epilator.

Men can save face with the PG410 Designer Stubble Kit (£29.99), which will help them maintain an effortless five o'clock shadow. Available from Boots and other leading retailers.

Brush up on some great festive gifts for teeth

HELP promote oral health and give your child a fun stocking-filler with a TePe Christmas toothbrush.

The festively-decorated toothbrushes are available in both child and adult sizes and help make brushing more fun.

With families looking forward to a feast of Christmas fare it is as important as ever to keep teeth clean and fresh.

Priced at just £1.49 and approved by the British Dental Health Foundation, TePe Christmas toothbrushes are available from dental practices and pharmacies.

Don't miss out on last day to Select an outfit

TODAY is the last day shoppers can take advantage of great savings at Select.

The ladies' clothes store at Westwood Cross in Thanet has been offering 50 per cent off selected partywear throughout December and 20 per cent off outerwear.

Hurry to the shopping centre today to avoid missing out on the last pre-Christmas discounts.

For details about events at Westwood Cross, see www.westwoodx.co.uk.

Mediterranean luxury is yours for less in sale

BUY luxury Italian home furnishings at discounted prices at Natuzzi's in House of Fraser, Maidstone.

The department – which can be found on the first floor of the Fremlin Walk store – is offering 20 per cent off all full-price items until January 31, so do not miss the chance to start the New Year with some fabulous new furnishings for your home.

Terms and conditions apply. For details of other events at Fremlin Walk, see www.fremlinwalk.co.uk.

Winter wonderland to go on after Christmas

BARGAIN-hunters can still enjoy festive fun at Bluewater even when Christmas Day has passed.

The centre's Winter Wonderland offers plenty of entertainment for visitors of all ages, from the ice rink and live performances on the bandstand to cooking demonstrations at the Ice Palace.

Winter Wonderland, which was opened by former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell, will run until Saturday, January 3.

For more information, visit the website at www.bluewater.co.uk.



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Castle View, Sutton Road, Maidstone www.spicecourt.co.uk

ITALIAN
Antonias Restaurant 01732 368877
160 High Street, Tonbridge www.thetonbridge.com/Antonias/

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22 London Road Sevenoaks www.thaisq.co.uk
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Top five Kent gigs

1. D-FINITIVE - Space (from Tenterden)
2. Steve Furlong - To Fall With You (from Birchington)
3. Ron Bowdery - Strange Sights on Bluebell Hill (from New Eltham)
4. The Flack - Animal (from Deal)
5. Shelta - Daze & Nights (from Bexley)

Gigs live up to an indulgent promise

■ BY SIMON ROBINSON

THE GOOD people at the Gulbenkian Theatre have put thoughts of Christmas over-indulgence aside to ensure the new year starts at pace.

The Canterbury theatre's arts team has resisted the temptation to join the rest of the working world in the annual pre-Christmas wind-down by lining up five nights of top music in January.

The month kicks off with jazz, moves on to 60s legends and finishes with Eastern drums.

There's more on the Gulbenkian's January programme below. For further details, visit www.kent.ac.uk/gulbenkian.

Monday, January 12 – Open Mic Jazz Singers' Night, 8pm.

Wannabe Louis Armstrongs and Nina Simones can take to the stage at the theatre's open mic night.

Tickets cost £4.90.

Monday, January 19 – John Leyton, Craig Douglas and The Flames, 7.45pm

Sixties singing stars John Leyton and Craig Douglas will perform at the Kent University Rock'n'Roll Society gig, backed by The Flames.

Between them, John and Craig recorded massive hits which defined the era, enjoying chart success with hits such as Johnny Remember Me, Wild Wind and Only Sixteen.

Tickets £10, concessions £8.

Saturday, January 24 – Paul Jones and Digby Fairweather, 7.45pm



The show features the dynamic new teaming of Paul Jones – 60s chart-topping star of Manfred Mann, the Manfreds and later his own Blues Band – and Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen, poll-winners of Marston's British Jazz Awards small group category 2005/6.

Tickets cost £20

Wednesday, January 28 – Jazz @ 5, 5pm to 6pm

University students and staff musicians will perform jazz standards and vocal numbers at the Gulbenkian Café Bar, giving stressed-out students an ideal day to wind down.



TASTY OFFERINGS: Dulsori (left) and Paul Jones of Manfred Mann fame are just two of the musical treats to help ease you into the new year at Canterbury's Gulbenkian

The hour-long performance is free and open to all.

Friday, January 30 – Dulsori, 7.45pm

Dulsori perform their Drums of Korea show on Friday, January 30, bringing the month's music to a close.

The band, whose name translates as 'heartbeat of the land', were formed in 1984 to preserve traditions and to promote the Korean traditional performing arts.

They will perform their Drums of Korea show, which has taken audiences across the country by storm. Tickets cost £15.

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ON GENERAL RELEASE

TWILIGHT (12A)



A love story with a dangerous twist. When school outcast Bella moves to live with her father, she doesn't expect to fall in love with Edward, an intelligent, witty yet mysterious local. Edward is not your average teenager, he's super-strong and super-fast, but he's not a super-hero, he's a vampire.

THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX (U)



The once joyous kingdom of Dor has become a miserable place. Despereaux Tilling, a tiny mouse with big ideas, teams up with fellow outcast Roscuro the rat and sets out on a journey to change things for the better in this animated hit.

INKHEART (PG)



Meggie's father has the ability to bring life characters from books that he reads to her at night. But when an evil villain kidnaps Meggie's father to bring other evil villains from books to life, it's down to Meggie and her friends to do things she has only ever read about and save the planet from true evil.

Join Danny and say yes

■ BY HANNAH STEPHENSON

WHAT happens to a man who says 'yes' to everything?

In short, he becomes a best-selling author, finds the girl of his dreams, carves a career as a TV presenter and ends up on a Hollywood set with Jim Carrey.

This is what has happened to Danny Wallace, author of Yes Man, first published in 2005 but now repackaged in time for the release on Boxing Day of the film of the same name, starring Jim Carrey in the title role.

Even now, Dundee-born Danny, 32, about to embark on a promotional tour in America with Carrey, finds this whole episode of his life quite surreal and has included a new chapter at the end of the latest edition of Yes Man about all of his experiences in Hollywood.

"Hollywood was great. I got to go on the set and meet all the people. It was surreal turning up and seeing a chair with your name on it," he says.

"It was made from book to film very quickly. It was amazing seeing it gradually become this bigger, all-American thing."

Meeting Jim Carrey was also great, he enthuses.

"There he was on the screen and when he left the screen he was suddenly by your side, which didn't seem to make any sense."

"From the moment he appeared, I was chatting away with him and it suddenly seemed very normal."

"Then part of your brain just goes 'Hang on, that's Jim Carrey!' and you must try not to give that away."

"We talked about very normal stuff, like what he'd watched on TV, but what is extraordinary is when the cameras are on and he turns into Jim Carrey the film star. He throws himself into it."

In one scene Carrey had to turn around and knock someone's drink over, Danny recalls.

"I watched him do the scene four or five times because he wasn't happy with it. He did something quite special and pulled off a classic Jim Carrey moment, which ended up with him fracturing a couple of his ribs.

"The next time I saw him walking by he had an ice pack and I said 'It was worth it, though' and he agreed it was totally worth it."

The original idea for Yes Man came from



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Danny's own negative attitude, he admits. "I was saying 'no' a lot and staying in a lot. I was quite happy just to watch TV."

"My friends would ask me out and I'd say 'I can't, I'm doing something...' and it would just

AFFIRMATIVE: Danny Wallace has gone from being Dave Gorman's hapless sidekick to an internationally-known writer and presenter, all because he said yes

be watching The Weakest Link. It was a habit I had to get out of.

"Someone said to me 'You should say 'yes' more and it struck a chord. That was the best thing in the world. It means you take a chance, grab an opportunity. If you say 'yes', everything can change. If you say 'no', nothing ever changes."

Today, he is still saying 'yes' more than he used to, he reflects.

"I'll end up going across town to see a very odd-named band who I would never in a million years have wanted to see and will probably never see again, but you're as likely to meet the love of your life at a bad party as at a good one."

"That's a good way to live your life. Excitement can be just around the corner, hiding in the littlest things."



YES MAN

Certificate 12A

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YOUR TV REVIEW



DOCTOR WHO
BBC One, 6pm, Christmas Day

■ BY TOM BETTS

WHAT better way to celebrate the fact that your stomach is groaning under the weight of too much festive gorging than with an evening in front of the box on Christmas Day?

While some families like to play charades or talk to each other, most sensible people decline any of that nonsense and prefer to zone out and ignore everyone else for as long as possible. I call these wise souls, 'my kind of people'.

This scenario is what a show like Doctor Who was made for and the Christmas installment, The Next Doctor, should keep you entertained for a time as the inevitable inter-familial bickering begins.

The Christmas show may not even throw up the answer to the big question at all, (that being, who will be the next incarnation of the Doctor?), but at least we should all tune in to see just who may fill David Tennant's size nines.

Last year's effort, with Kylie Minogue and a giant flying spaceship called the Titanic was very disappointing and not of the quality now expected for the BBC's standard-bearing Christmas show, a mantle once carried by EastEnders – even if that now seems odd.

Those stomping party-poopers the Cybermen are back for this year's adventure and are sure to be wreaking havoc in a were-not-quite-as-good-as-the-Daleks style.

But most of all, it is just who will be Who that will fascinate most.

David Tennant has been a huge hit with the masses, and in particular



WHO'S WHO?: Christmas is the time to tune in and see who will take over from David Tennant

younger fans, but among much of the hardcore fan base he is seen as too lightweight or not quirky enough to be thought of as a classic Doctor.

David Morrissey, who has been cropping up in the trailers to the episode, is hot favourite to take on the role, but surely that would be a little too obvious.

You would hope that the creators will want to pull off a surprise and will have kept the character's next face under wraps.

Other contenders include Little Britain's David Walliams, Cold Feet's Jimmy Nesbitt and John Simm, who appeared before as the hero's nemesis, The Master.

Paterson Joseph, star of Peep Show could become the first black actor to take on the role or maybe Jennifer Saunders will become the first female of time travel.

Whoever does end up occupying the Tardis the transformation will be one of the most memorable television moments of the year, and it's much better than talking and stuff.

YOUR WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

BY RUSSELL GRANT



AQUARIUS (Jan 21-Feb 19)

RETREATING to a quiet, private place puts you back in touch with your true essence. Recently, your identity has been wrapped up in your social circle. Now you're starting to realise there are differences between you and your friends. For one thing, you're more visionary.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Aquarius** 09067-531762

TAURUS (Apr 21-May 20)

EVEN though you're a creature of habit, you aren't immune to adventure. If you feel you're in a rut this is a great time to make a huge transformation. Travelling abroad will be wonderfully enriching. This journey could put you on the path of romance.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Taurus** 09067-531753

LEO (Jul 24-Aug 23)

THIS week is wonderful for embarking on a whole new routine. Improving your diet and launching an exercise routine will both pay off handsomely. If your job has been jeopardising your health, you need to find another situation. A new position could fall in your lap.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Leo** 09067-531756

SCORPIO (Oct 24-Nov 22)

WHETHER you know it or not, your words have tremendous power so watch what you say. Get into the habit of offering constructive criticisms and optimistic forecasts. Although it's not in your nature to view the glass as half full, you can overcome this tendency.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Scorpio** 09067-531759

PISCES (Feb 19-Mar 20)

BE mindful of the company you keep. If you've been hanging around a bunch of pessimists, their attitude will cloud your thinking. When left to your own devices, your true spirit will shine through. Soon, you'll start attracting the sort of people who enjoy your optimism.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Pisces** 09067-531763

GEMINI (May 22-Jun 22)

A POSSIBLE affair with someone sexy causes you to see yourself in a whole new light. You may be inspired to undergo an elaborate program of self improvement. What once seemed to be an inevitable arrangement now looks like a personal choice.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Gemini** 09067-531754

VIRGO (Aug 24-Sep 23)

YOU've always prided yourself on being a practical, responsible person, but now you're starting to suspect you've been missing out on life. Once you get an initial adrenaline rush, you'll become more daring. Friends and family will be surprised as you yearn for adventure.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Virgo** 09067-531757

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23-Dec 22)

HAVING a secret stash of cash may appeal to you. Conventional wisdom says that having a year's worth of salary tucked into savings can prove liberating. You'll be much less prone to stay in a troubled relationship or stick with a terrible job if you have the means to strike out.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Sagittarius** 09067-531760

CAPRICORN (Dec 22-Jan 20)

FACING your deepest fear is scary, but empowering. Status has always been very important to you. Without it, you've always worried that people won't respect you. Actually, the truth is different. People love you for who you are, not what you do.

• To find out more about what the stars have in store call Russell on **Capricorn** 09067-531761

Calls cost 75p per minute. Service provided by g8wave London N7

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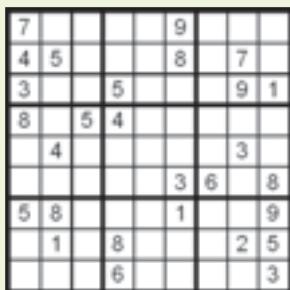
CROSSWORD & SUDOKU

No68

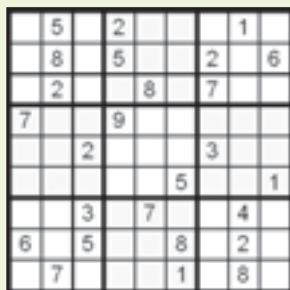
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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9

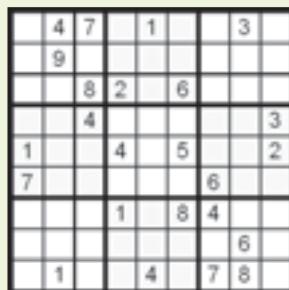
EASY



MEDIUM



HARD



CRYPTIC CLUES

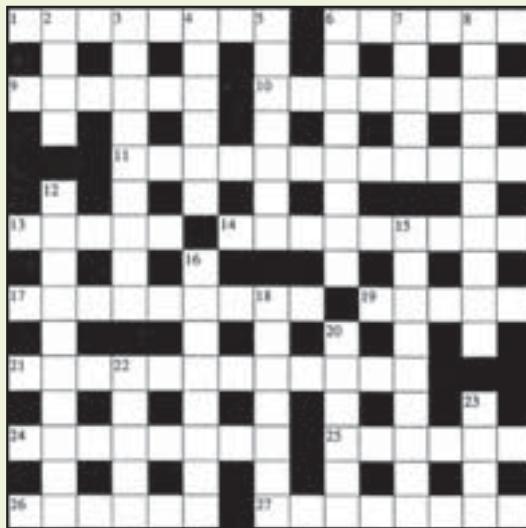
ACROSS

- 1 Hot stuff with aspic cooked inside (8)
- 6 Bet Sid converted flat (6)
- 9 Hooligan Virginia destroyed land (6)
- 10 Floor covering, sort used by printers (8)
- 11 Not being enterprising having a house on the pavement (7.5)
- 13 Theatre-in-the-round (5)
- 14 Corner wriggler used as bait (9)
- 17 Replace catalogue - clot! (9)
- 19 Earthen pot obtained during said sea-trip (5)
- 21 Knowing enough to be reassured by the doctor? (4-8)
- 24 He quips about trapping youth leader with bodily development (8)
- 25 Means of removing hard water from windscreen perhaps (2-4)
- 26 Contort becoming whiter (6)
- 27 Oddly in a rough way (8)

DOWN

- 2 Jack's reportedly following a Dutch football team (4)
- 3 Catch seat first on part of bicycle (9)
- 4 Accountant left one company cotton cloth (6)
- 5 Plant, one taking on large number (7)
- 6 Lying Ben removed graciously and in a kindly way (8)
- 7 Some trade terms used are enough to put one off (5)
- 8 Deprive little devil taking on his version (10)
- 12 Nearly all to catch the girl completely (10)
- 15 Web found everything in broad earth (9)
- 16 150 I name I question going to eastern hospital (8)
- 18 US author found the gold hidden with more gold (7)
- 20 Smear some of this mud generally in (6)
- 22 Is last character taken in by officer or composer? (5)
- 23 Ringing laughter (4)

SCRIBBLE HERE



QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- 1 Fourth part (8)
- 6 Drooped (6)
- 9 Snuffle (6)
- 10 Fashion shop (8)
- 11 Rowdy frolic (6-6)
- 13 Experience (5)
- 14 Male wedding attendants (9)
- 17 I wondered (anag.) (9)
- 19 Devastate (5)
- 21 Myopic (5-7)
- 24 Caribou (8)
- 25 Stumble (6)
- 26 Pointed writing instrument (6)
- 27 Dire (8)

DOWN

- 2 Bone in arm (4)
- 3 Do resolve (anag.) (5.4)
- 4 On fire (6)
- 5 Cylindrical (7)
- 6 Resonating chamber (8)
- 7 Showiness (5)
- 8 Cheerful enthusiasm (10)
- 12 Ornamentation (10)
- 15 Stood across (9)
- 16 Greek hero (8)
- 18 Had a bet (7)
- 20 Itself (anag.) (6)
- 22 Of the kidneys (5)
- 23 Lima's country (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS No67

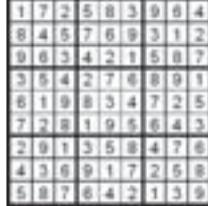
EASY



MEDIUM



HARD



Answers to all of this week's quizzes can be found on our website

CRYPTIC SOLUTION No67

ACROSS: 1 Slavery 5 Ogreish 9 Ivor 10 Swan around 12 Strike up 13 Grease 14 Relief worker 17 Presentiment 21 Inform 23 Biarritz 24 Buttoned-up 25 Ashy 26 All told 27 Jetting. **DOWN:** 2 Levity 3 Verdigris 4 Russell 6 Glasgow 7 Evoke 8 Sinister 11 Apple-pie bed 15 Retardant 16 Tranquill 18 Nominal 19 Example 20 Itchen 22 Octet.

QUICK SOLUTION No68

ACROSS: 1 Quandary 2 Razzle-dazzle 13 Enjoy 10 Longtime 11 Sauged 9 Swivel 14 Countermeasures 17 Rederidderom 19 Jiffy 20 Shredded 22 Retail 23 Waggoner 26 Pot 27 Delinquent 28 Retiree 29 Feline 30 **DOWN:** 2 Stylin 27 Deepdene 28 Retiree 29 Feline 30 Shredded 31 Sauged 32 Waggoner 33 Stylin 34 Deepdene 35 Retiree 36 Shredded 37 Gilt 8 Belline 38 Retiree 39 Feline 40 Dower sole 41 Shredded 42 Retiree 43 Feline 44 Stylin 45 Deepdene 46 Shredded 47 Stylin 48 Belline 49 Retiree 50 Feline 51 Shredded 52 Deepdene 53 Stylin 54 Deepdene 55 Retiree 56 Shredded 57 Stylin 58 Deepdene 59 Retiree 60 Feline 61 Shredded 62 Stylin 63 Deepdene 64 Retiree 65 Feline 66 Shredded 67 Stylin 68 Deepdene 69 Retiree 70 Feline 71 Shredded 72 Deepdene 73 Stylin 74 Deepdene 75 Retiree 76 Feline 77 Shredded 78 Stylin 79 Deepdene 80 Retiree 81 Feline 82 Shredded 83 Stylin 84 Deepdene 85 Retiree 86 Feline 87 Shredded 88 Stylin 89 Deepdene 90 Retiree 91 Feline 92 Shredded 93 Stylin 94 Deepdene 95 Retiree 96 Feline 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Amazing Azores' hidden gems

BY KATE WHITING

THE Azores are politically part of Europe but, marooned in the middle of the Atlantic, culturally and geographically this Portuguese outpost could hardly be farther away.

On this verdant archipelago of nine volcanic islands with its own pace of life, far removed from the bustling cities of continental Europe, visitors are advised to leave their expectations on the plane, "slow down, relax and adapt" to the Azorean way of doing things.

It's sensible advice. This is hardly a destination for beach-bums, although the islands muster a few beaches between them, mostly of black sand. But the lush flora is stunning and walkers keen to get away from it all are in seventh heaven.

The year-round mild climate has temperatures hitting a balmy 24 degrees in August. In this friendly, relaxed and fascinating place, you can explore natural lakes and spas and try some great restaurants in between.

We began with a walking tour of Ponta Delgada, the main city on the largest island of Sao Miguel. Like many towns in the Azores, it was built from the most common rock on the archipelago – basalt.

In the market we learned how to tell when locally-grown pineapple is ripe – from the size of its scales – and tried a delicious Azorean delicacy, bananas with local cheese.

From a lookout at the top of the market, the



TRANQUIL: Sao Lourenco Bay on the small island of Santa Maria (above) and the view over Ponta Delgada (right)

view across the terracotta-tiled roof-tops of Ponta Delgada is interspersed with a couple of high-rise concrete constructions, apparently apartments for tourists.

In the afternoon, my partner and I wandered down to the modern marina for a whale-watching trip.

Our base was the Hotel do Colegio, a beautiful old music college in the centre of town, with basalt arches and a central courtyard with a swimming pool.

Next morning, an internal flight whisked us to nearby Santa Maria. At 37 square miles, it is one of the smallest islands of the archipelago, but the first to be discovered in the 1400s.

Each village in Santa Maria has a colour scheme. Simple, bungalow-style houses are all painted white, with a different-coloured border

around the doors and outer edges of the walls, depending on which village they belong to.

Pico Alto is the highest point at 590 metres, offering a stunning 360-degree view of the island. From here we could see the massive contrast between the hilly, forested south-west and the flat, fertile north-east.

Our visit to the Azores ended with one of its biggest highlights – a Geofun tour, guided by Pedro, a Portuguese-born geologist at Ponta Delgada's visitor centre, who whisked us into his shiny jeep.

His superb English and deep knowledge of the island made the day a great adventure.

Flying home, we knew we had barely scratched the surface of the Azores.

There are so many more islands to explore, you don't have to make an excuse to go back.

FACT FILE:

Time difference	UK -1hr
Language	Portuguese
Capital	Ponta Delgada
Population	243000
Religion	Roman Catholic
Climate	Temperate
Currency	Euro (1.2 to £1 approx)

Travel details

Kate Whiting was a guest of Sunvil Discovery, which offers short-break, tailor-made, multi-centre and fly-drive packages to nine islands of the Azores.

- Three nights' bed and breakfast at Hotel do Colegio on Sao Miguel starts at £542 in August, including flights ex-Gatwick and transfers.

- Half-day whale-watching tour costs £38 from Ponta Delgada; full-day geological tour costs £52.

- Sunvil's 14-night grand tour of six islands (Sao Miguel, Santa Maria, Faial, Pico, Sao Jorge and Terceira) starts at £1513, including flights, transfers, bed-and-breakfast accommodation, some entry tickets and guided excursions.

- Sunvil reservations: 0208 758 4722 and www.sunvil.co.uk.



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MOTORS NEWS



Drop in VAT means 500 is now a bargain buy

FIAT'S 500 which has caused a storm in the showroom can now be put on the road for under £8,000. Dealers, and buyers, have the Chancellor to thank after the reduction in VAT.

The 1.2-litre 500 Pop price had crept up to £8,100 during the summer but now you can get one on the road for £7,929.

With dealers offering spectacular finance deals and every one of them looking to win your business, don't forget to ask for a few extras as well.

In November, car sales in the UK fell 36.8 per cent to 100,333 units compared with the same month last year.



New eco-friendly cars 'show' the way forward

MERCEDES has unveiled three new environmentally-friendly 'show' cars.

Called BlueZero – to suggest 'blue skies and zero emissions' – the Mercedes concepts are to include an electric car and a concept powered by a hydrogen fuel cell.

Outside the 'green' bodywork is identical for all three prototypes.

All feature transparent cladding for the rear wheels to reduce resistance.

All the eco cars on show in America use the platform of the next-generation Mercedes B-class compact. The new B-class is to go on sale in Europe in 2012.

Hamilton's got it licked over on the Isle of Man

BRITISH F1 ace Lewis Hamilton is to feature on a series of stamps in the Isle of Man.

They'll cost – well, they'll cost about the price of a stamp and will be released on January 15.

The IOM has beaten the Royal Mail which revealed it was considering a set of commemorative stamps featuring the McLaren driver.

It has been reported the Royal Mail's new stamp will be released early next year and they will serve as an accolade for the youngest driver to ever win the World Championship.

It would be a break with tradition for the Royal Mail which has already released its 2009 stamp schedule and has a policy of not featuring living non-royalty on stamps unless they are part of a larger group.



STYLISH: Volkswagen's dramatically styled Scirocco is a decent four-seater, a terrific drive and looks good value compared to its rivals priced at £20,940 for the standard trim

New Scirocco wards off chill of recession

ROAD TEST VW SCIROCCO

■ BY STEVE LOADER

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Green rating	★★★★★

ed approach; the new Scirocco range features VW's Adaptive Chassis Control system (ACC) as standard so this already versatile car can match all moods and situations.

'Normal' is the all-rounder and 'Comfort' is great for long distances, but 'Sport' soon became my default, because it shows the car's tautness and flat cornering to effect without punishing driver and occupants.

The cabin shows less design input than for the muscular exterior, but it is a neat and well-arranged job using robust quality materials and there is plenty of room in the back.

You could crib about the high rear window line and lowered headroom, but if they are deal breakers then check out the Golf GTI instead.

I take similar issue with whinges about the Scirocco's boot; it is massive for this type of car and entirely in keeping with the dynasty's mix of sportiness and practicality yet you hear moans like "the loading lip's too high", "it's not that big" – what do people expect from a coupé that handles like a dream, seats four properly and costs much less than upmarket rivals?

• Email steve.loader@kosmedia.co.uk



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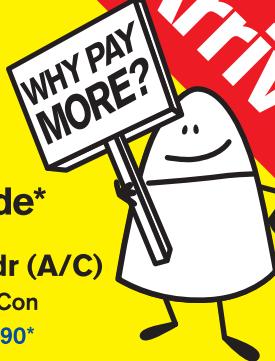
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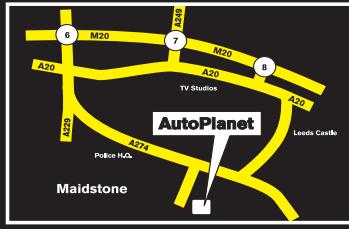
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USED CAR ROUND-UP: OUR PICK FROM A KEY SECTOR

POPULAR SUPERMINIS

AS more people downsize their car and their fuel and road tax bills, chances are that one or all of the following popular used superminis will be on their shopping list. Year in, year out they are the UK's most consistent best-sellers – a trend expected to become even firmer in the current economic climate. A word of warning though; as second-hand prices harden, make sure you don't pay more than it would cost to keep your old car longer or even make you think about a new car.

FORD FIESTA



FORD'S hugely successful supermini marches on with a new model just out, but don't expect weaker used prices for older versions. Volatile fuel costs, draconian road taxes and fears of a recession have made the Fiesta a top target for its reliability, decent driving experience, engines to suit all pockets and three and five-door body styles. Ford has also regularly produced special and limited editions, but watch that you don't pay more for extra goodies, especially when largely cosmetic.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

VAUXHALL CORSA



VAUXHALL'S Corsa was created to attack the Ford Fiesta head on, yet has never quite achieved the volumes of its rival. Nevertheless, it offers the same virtues, plus a greater range of engines including a punchy and frugal, if a little buzzy, three-cylinder petrol engine now in greater demand due to these straitened times. Several generations of Corsa followed a 'teardrop' body style, but the latest car is bigger and more aggressively sculpted – almost a 'supersize supermini'.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

RENAULT CLIO



DOWNSIZING can be sensible and chic with the Clio and the most recent generations have married durability and driving fun with Gallic charm. Again, the option of three or five doors is a big selling point, but our French contender also has the bonus of excellent diesel versions, though the cost of the actual fuel versus petrol argues against it currently. The Clio design has tended to be highly practical as well as charming, with good space for rear passengers.

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Looks and image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

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Closing Date: Friday 2nd January 2009
Interviews: Week beginning 5th January 2009

achievement for all

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 Band: 6
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Ashford
 Ref: 767-ECC695
 Closing date: 02/01/09

Team Secretary

Salary: £14,834 - £17,732 pa
 Band: 3
 Hours: 20
 Location: Dover
 Ref: 767-ECC696
 Closing date: 07/01/09

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 Hours: 37.5
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 Closing date: 29/12/08

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Salary: £29,091 to £38,352 pa
 Band: 7
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Whitstable
 Ref: 767-EIC699
 Closing date: 29/12/08

Community Children's Nurse

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa
 Band: 6
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Children's Assessment Centre, Kent & Canterbury Hospital
 Ref: 767-ECC655
 Closing date: 31/12/08

Community Children's Nurse - Clinical Deputy

Salary: £37,106 to £44,527 pa
 Band: 8a
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Children's Assessment Centre, Kent & Canterbury Hospital
 Ref: 767-ECC656
 Closing date: 31/12/08

Staff Nurse

Salary: £20,225 - £26,123 pa
 Band: 5
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Whitstable & Tankerton Hospital
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 Closing date: 04/01/09

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 Band: 6
 Hours: 22.5
 Location: Dover
 Ref: 767-ECC688
 Closing date: 05/01/09

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Salary: £20,225 to £26,123 pa
 Band: 5
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Whitfield Court, Dover
 Ref: 767-ECC690
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Health Promotion Practitioner

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 Band: 5
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Whitfield Court, Dover
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 Closing date: 31/12/08

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Salary: £20,225 to £26,123 pa
 Band: 5
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Cairn Ryan, Dover
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 Closing date: 02/01/09

Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa
 Band: 6
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Swale, Kent
 Ref: 767-ECC713
 Closing date: 02/01/09

Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa
 Band: 6
 Hours: 37.5
 Location: Whitstable Health Centre
 Ref: 767-ECC722
 Closing date: 02/01/09

Health Visitor

Salary: £24,103 to £32,653 pa
 Band: 6
 Hours: 30
 Location: Ramsgate, Kent
 Ref: 767-ECC720
 Closing date: 02/01/09

Healthcare Assistant

Salary: £14,834 - £17,732 pa
 Band: 3
 Hours: 18
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 Closing date: 02/01/09

Healthcare Assistant

Salary: £12,922 to £15,950 pa
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For an informal discussion, please contact Sam Downie, Assistant Director at sdownie@kca.org.uk

An application form and job description can be downloaded from <http://www.kca.org.uk/pages/vacancies.html> or email recruitment@kca.org.uk. Alternatively, you can write to KCA (UK), Dan House, 44 East Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AT or call 01795 590635. Please quote reference: 538

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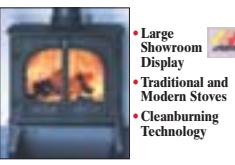


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with Business Editor
TONY PATEY

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Online learning to cut out packaging waste

WITH cost-savings an ongoing priority for businesses during the tough economic climate, sustainable business experts Envirowise are advising companies in the South East to think 'out of the box' when it comes to identifying ways they can cut out waste in 2009.

With an estimated 80 per cent of the cost of a product and its packaging set at the design stage, the adoption of leaner, more sustainable, packaging design, without any loss in performance, can have a positive knock-on effect on costs and profitability.

To help companies understand where improvements can be made, and to help them influence supply chains, Envirowise is running a free webinar on eco-design for products and packaging on Wednesday, February 25.

To sign up or find out more, see www.envirowise.gov.uk/webinar.

Funding to help with management training

GOOD Christmas news for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who have between five and 249 employees: they now have the opportunity to claim up to £2,000 of funding to spend on leadership training for their senior management team.

With up to £1,000 available through the Government's Train To Gain scheme, plus another £1,000 of matched funding by training company Enterprise Leaders Worldwide, executives of qualifying SMEs can be taught entrepreneurial leadership by past and present stars of TV's Dragons' Den, Simon Woodroffe and Duncan Bannatyne. Details are available at www.train2gain1k.co.uk.

Demand is on the up

APPROACHING the first anniversary of the launch of its Thames Gateway office at Chatham Historic Dockyard, regional law firm Furley Page is bucking the business trend and celebrating a period of growth.

The team is led by commercial law partner Susan Jennings, who said the team had found an increasing demand for private client services – from people moving home to needing advice on wills, tax-planning and family law issues.

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FOR MORE BUSI-



SCALED DOWN: Recession fears were put aside by many businesses, with three in five firms still holding office parties, even if they were slightly smaller than previous years

We're not too gloomy to hold office parties

■ BY TONY PATEY

GLOOM in the economy did not stop businesses staging celebrations in the run-up to Christmas this year – but some of the trimmings were carved out of the traditional office get-togethers.

A survey published by the Chartered Management Institute revealed three out of every five firms held an office party – only slightly down on the two out of three in 2007.

Bosses say the knees-ups were designed to boost staff morale despite the miserable predictions for the year ahead.

The report suggests that some employers, however, were adopting a more socially aware approach – preferring to spend their money on good causes.

But they were watching the pennies. Many employers believed extravagant parties were unnecessary. Fifty per cent, for example, sug-

gested hosting expensive parties could have a negative impact on their reputation.

For many the festivities were funded out of the staff's own pocket. A quarter of employers in the region made no financial contribution to office parties this year, although a quarter agreed to pay up to £40 per person.

Key findings included:

- Budget bashes: only a minority in Kent – 12 per cent – included employees' partners in this year's celebrations and just two per cent invited clients. Half were concerned expensive parties might send out the wrong message in the current climate.
- Social conscience: 37 per cent in the region bought only Christmas cards that support charities and 22 per cent went for eCards – demonstrating a concern for the environment. And half argued Christmas was an appropri-

ate time to engage in corporate social responsibility – going out into the community to help.

• 'Tis the season of thanks: 37 per cent of line managers bought gifts for their team members and 16 per cent gave time off at Christmas without taking out of holiday leave.

Jo Causon, director of marketing and corporate affairs at the institute, said: "It should come as no surprise that employers controlled Christmas budgets with tighter purse-strings this year."

"However, it is encouraging to see responsible budget management is going hand-in-hand with an effort to thank staff for their efforts during the year and a determination to recognise hard work."

Away from work, the survey also asked respondents to name the 'must-hear' festive music. Among the favourites this year were perennial classic Silent Night, Fairytale Of New York by The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, and Bing Crosby's White Christmas.

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Villa cup clash to pack out Priestfield



FULL HOUSE: Tickets for Gillingham's FA Cup third-round clash against Aston Villa have sold out

THE last few tickets for Gillingham's FA Cup tie with Aston Villa were sold this week with Priestfield set for its first sell-out in more than five years.

Despite ticket prices being increased by 15 per cent on a normal home game, the prospect of watching England stars Gareth Barry, Ashley Young and Gabriel Agbonlahor has seen Gills fans turn out in force.

Supporters with season tickets or ticket stubs from games against Stockport and Chesterfield, queued for more than an hour at times last week to get their hands on the prized tickets for the third-round tie on January 4.

If Villa sell out their 1,500 allocation it will be the first time Priestfield

FOOTBALL

will be completely sold out since September 2003, when 11,400 crammed in to watch Gills beat West Ham 2-0 in Division One.

Regardless of the result, Gills are set to bank at least £300,000 from the game, which will be shown live on television. The figure could rise substantially if they manage to force a replay at Villa Park, where they would take home 45 per cent of the gate.

The club have already seen a surge in interest, with ticket sales for last Saturday's game against Brentford

and the visit of Wycombe Wanderers on Sunday higher than expected.

Gills boss Mark Stimson is aware his players could be distracted ahead of games against Dagenham & Redbridge on Boxing Day and Wycombe on Sunday, but plans to use Villa as an incentive.

He said: "We have got to stay focused because everyone's human and we know what's coming. We can't get away from that but I'll be stressing to the players that won't happen if you don't perform correctly because no one's shirt is guaranteed."

Log on to www.kentnews.co.uk for live match updates from Gills' next three games and all the build-up to the big FA Cup clash.

Kent to take on Aussies in packed fixture list

KENT will take on the visiting Australians in a two-day game at Canterbury ahead of the fifth and final Test of the 2009 Ashes series.

Next season's fixtures were announced last week, with Rob Key's side beginning the LV County Championship against Northamptonshire at Canterbury on April 21.

Beckenham will host two Twenty20 games against Middlesex Crusaders and Sussex Sharks. Essex are the opponents for the Tunbridge Wells Festival in June, while Middlesex visit for Canterbury week from August 5.

Key's side end the County Championship campaign at St Lawrence against Leicestershire. Kent will take on Ricky Ponting's Australians in a two-day game on August 15.

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See our London Golf Club course guide with expert Alasdair Robertson

Bank Holiday bonanza at Lydden race track

LYDDEN Hill will host the European Rallycross Championship over the Bank holiday weekend of April 12-13.

It will be the first time the circuit has hosted the event since 1996 and manager Amy Doran is expecting a record crowd of 30,000 to flock to the Dover circuit.

In order to meet the FIA regulations for the event, Lydden has had to extend the track at a cost in the region of £200,000.

The newly-built circuit will be tested ahead of the European Championships on January 3 by hosting a round of the Winter Rallycross Series.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SPORTS STORIES TO SPORTS EDITOR GLENN PEARSON AT glenn.pearson@kosmedia.co.uk



RETURN: Crowds flocked to the London Club to watch the likes of Colin Montgomerie (on the tee) and Padraig Harrington (inset) battle it out for the European Open in May

Coup for club as it bags European Open return

THE London Golf Club has set its sights on attracting more than 100,000 spectators to the European Open next year after the tournament was again awarded to the Kent course.

The four-day Open in July was the first time the club, near Ash, had hosted an event on the European Tour. Despite being hit by bad weather on the final day, about 61,000 people attended the tournament, which featured a top class field including Sergio Garcia, Padraig Harrington and Ian Poulter.

Heath Harvey, general manager at the London Club, was delighted with the maiden tournament but is hoping for more in 2009.

"On the whole, most things exceeded our expectations," he said. "We are just hellbent on growing the attendance to in excess of 100,000."

GOLF

■ BY DAVID PRITCHARD

There's no point in putting the tournament on unless you can make it as big as possible. Our ambition is to make this one of the biggest events in Kent next year."

The European Tour began talks about bringing the tournament back to the club this summer, but the announcement was delayed by problems finding a sponsor. A sponsor is due to be announced soon, which allowed the Tour to make its decision to return to Kent next May.

Despite the uncertainty, the club was confident of retaining the tournament and within weeks of this year's event had begun a £100,000 groundworks programme. Several new tees have been installed to make the

course tougher, while minor improvements will be made throughout the spring.

Ashford's Benn Barham, Kent's only European Tour professional, knows the club well and believes it compares well to the other courses featured in the calendar.

He said: "The venue is fantastic, both the club and the course are built for a major tournament, it's always a joy to go there."

The club also hopes to stage a repeat of this year's hugely successful 'Free Ticket Thursday' promotion. About 14,000 people signed up for up to two tickets each with the scheme, which gave 24,000 golf fans the chance to see world class players for free on the first day of the tournament.

Harvey said: "It's down to the European Tour but I would hope it comes back because it's a good initiative. It was terrific to see so many people of all ages enjoying the golf for free on the first day."

Stimson confident of sealing Barcham deal

FOOTBALL

■ BY DAVID PRITCHARD

Gillingham 1

Jackson 59



Brentford 1

MacDonald 28



GILLINGHAM have agreed a deal with Tottenham Hotspur to bring Andy Barcham to the club on what is believed to be a permanent switch when the transfer window reopens next month.

The versatile forward, who celebrated his 22nd birthday last week, returns to White Hart Lane this weekend after completing a three-month loan spell at Priestfield.

Gills boss Mark Stimson has long been keen to re-sign Barcham, whose contract runs out this summer, when the window opens. After Saturday's game with Brentford, he hinted Tottenham were willing to sell the player, providing Barcham wants to leave.

Stimson said: "I have got to sit down with Andy's agent, I've already had a pre-talk with him and he's quite positive, now it's about putting something across to Andy that tempts him to come. I hope we can do that because I think he's a player with a lot of potential and he's definitely added something to our team."

Gillingham starting XI



Subs used: Southall (Jarrett 69), Oli (Mulligan 80)

Barcham, who has scored five goals in 16 games during his loan spell, was arguably the best player on the pitch as Gills drew at home to Brentford on Saturday.

During a poor first half, an horrendous mix-up between Simon King and Garry Richards allowed former Gravesend & Northfleet striker, Charlie MacDonald, to score and send Brentford in a goal up at the break.

Gills rallied after the break and Simeon Jackson levelled with an instinctive header for his 11th goal of the season.

Brentford were reduced to ten men after Nathan Elder's shove on Simon King, but Gills were twice denied by goalkeeper Ben Hamer.

First he tipped Richards' bullet header round the post, before somehow keeping out the follow-on Dennis Oli's low shot in injury time.

The draw lifted Stimson's side to eighth place, just two points from second place, but the game ended on a sour note as Barry Fuller was red carded. The resulting three-game ban means the skipper will miss the FA Cup tie with Aston Villa on January 4.

Gills travel to Dagenham & Redbridge on Boxing Day.



Picture KEITH SLATER

TRANSFER: Andy Barcham could join Gillingham on a permanent transfer next month



TEAM TALK

with Gills skipper BARRY FULLER

I'm gutted I'll have to miss Villa game

WE KEPT our unbeaten run going on Saturday, but from our perspective we didn't perform anywhere near our best. That was disappointing, especially with how good we have been at home this season.

But it shows what we are capable of when we can get a point against a team high up in the table and we believe we haven't even played very well. If it wasn't for their keeper making two brilliant saves at the end, we would have won it.

The game was really disappointing for me because I was sent off and will now miss the big league games against Dagenham on Friday and Wycombe on Monday, plus the FA Cup game against Aston Villa. I'm really gutted about it. The Villa game would have probably been the biggest of my career. That's not the point, I miss two really big league games. It's going to hurt and it's hard to get my head round it at the moment.

I went in for a tackle and didn't think anything of it. The referee blew for a free-kick so I started to run back to get in position to defend it, but then I saw him go to his pocket and he took the red card out.

He said I went over the ball and stamped on their player. I am a physical player, but I would never go out to stamp on anyone and felt I won the ball, but he obviously saw it differently.

I knew what it meant straight away. At first I thought he was going to show me a second yellow, which would have only been a one game ban. I don't think it was even a foul and I've been sent off for it.

Sometimes suspended players don't have to go to away games, but I feel as captain I should go, even if I'm told to take the day off I'll be at Dagenham on Boxing Day.

I'm big enough and strong enough to come into training this week and get on with it. Hopefully the boys can still get the results and if we can do that we might even get into the top three by Sunday.



Picture KAREN KOPP



CHRISTMAS CHEER: Chatham boss Steve Binks saw his side begin the festive programme with a win

trick in the club's reserves' 6-0 win against Folkestone Invicta.

Jim Bodle, a full-back signed from Maidstone United, is also in contention for a debut in the game.

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Chris Dickson could return to Priestfield if Gills manager Mark Stimson has his way



TRY: Rob Ellis claimed one of Medway's four tries

Coach not counting his chickens just yet

RUGBY

MEDWAY head coach Taff Gwilliam insists it's still far too early to talk about a third consecutive promotion despite watching his side win their 14th straight game on Saturday.

The Kent 1 league leaders preserved their four-point advantage at the top with a 28-13 win against local rivals Gillingham Anchors. It continued a remarkable run of form which has seen the team win every game since losing on the opening day of the season.

Gwilliam said: "We are delighted with the win but I've seen plenty of clubs who are top at Christmas fade and finish nowhere at the end of the season. We've got ten league games left and it's a cliché, but we'll be keeping our feet on the ground and taking them one at a time."

Anchors took the lead with a try from Mark Pike, but tries from Martin Farbrace, Rob Ellis and Simon Green, all converted by Glen Wadsworth, put Medway 21-5 up at half-time.

Anchs closed the gap with a penalty, but Wadsworth converted his own try to put the result beyond doubt. Adam Davidson scored a consolation for the hosts late on.

Medway's next competitive game is on January 10 at home to Ashford.

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